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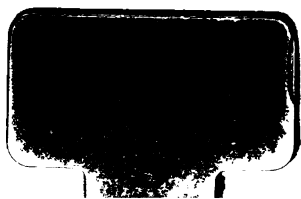
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FRIENDSHIP WITH GOD :

AN ESSAY

ON ITS

NATURE, EXCELLENCE, IMPORTANCE,
AND
MEANS OF IMPROVEMENT.

BY THE REV. RICHARD JONES.

"ACQUAINT NOW THYSELF WITH HIM."—*Job xxiv. 21.*

"QUOCUNQUE ABIERO IBI ERIT SOL—IBI LUNA COLLOQUIA CUM DEO."

(Ἡ πρὸς θεοῦ ὁμιλία)—*Arrian, in Epictet.*



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M D C C C X L V I I .

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DEDICATION.

TO JOSEPH SOUTH, ESQ.

SIR,

This book treats of the very highest kind of Friendship; and to which you are not a stranger.

I have taken the liberty of inscribing it to you, in grateful acknowledgment of the Friendship which you have shewn to me; and as a memorial of the pastoral relation in which I sometime since stood, to a Church in the City, of which you had for many years been a member and an ornament. I know you will have no objection to your name standing in such a connection as that of Friendship with God, by means of this Friendship, a name becomes excellent upon the earth and is written in heaven.

I thought Friendship with God a lovely representation of religion, and have therefore carried it to an extent, beyond what I at first intended.

Will it be any satisfaction to such as pronounce the religion of Jesus defective, in that it does not more largely inculcate human Friendship, to be told, that the design of it is to restore and establish the divine.

May this Friendship dignify and bless the remaining days of your life; and make all beyond, happy and immortal to you.

I am, Sir,

Your respectful and obliged

Humble Servant,

R. J.

PECKHAM, SURREY,

October 20th, 1772.

PREFACE.

IN offering to the public a little obsolete work first sent forth into the world above seventy years ago, and never probably circulated extensively, something by way of explanation is clearly due. Since it has attracted the attention of the person who is now republishing it, the enquiry has very reasonably been made, who was its author? On which, no light nor information has arisen. And though the interest which these pages have excited in one family, and certain of their friends, would have rendered it highly agreeable to have traced some personal recollections of the good man, I cannot deem the want of this a serious misfortune. If it be, let it impress on the minds of all, but most on those of us who can never hope to entitle ourselves to the notice of posterity even so much as the writer of this work, the brevity of the period at which we shall be utterly forgotten.

My relative, being young, almost immediately after conceiving the idea that a benefit would be conferred upon the public by the re-publication of this tract; adopted the most judicious step of consulting thereon an ancient, venerable friend of the family, whose erudition, piety, and excellence of understanding

eminently pointed him out as a person whose judgment must be highly valuable. This gentleman, whose report was decisive of the high merits of the work, placed it in the hands of a much honoured and beloved Prelate, whose opinion of it was also favourable. Highly rejoiced should I be to consider myself at liberty (which I do not), to designate this distinguished friend of man more clearly; because we have reason to rejoice that no general description of eminent virtues can be considered applicable exclusively to one only amongst those who now grace this high station. His Lordship has been pleased to inscribe in the copy of the work now before me, (which was published in the year 1772), the following apt and emphatic quotation.

“One longs for affection,—for an object to love devotedly,—for an interesting friend to associate and commune with,—meanwhile the Deity offers his Friendship and communion, and is refused or forgotten!”—*Foster's Life and Correspondence. Vol. 1, P. 181.*

That I should fail to set a high and peculiar value on this publication it would be painful to me to imagine. An affectionate, honoured father was used to place it in my hands, at an early age, to read it to him; in the midst of which his judicious remarks and benignant questions tended delightfully to impress on my young mind the deep and refreshing import of its contents.

A general idea of this invaluable, parental instruction thus tenderly imparted to me, may be better judged of than I could describe it, by a quotation from an old author which I subjoin.

Happy am I, at an advanced period of life, to find this little treatise so highly valued by immediate

descendants of my beloved father, that one of them considers it a pleasure as well as a duty to re-publish it.

J. S.

Addison Road, Kensington, 1847.

“Paternus lived about two hundred years ago; he had but one son, whom he educated himself in his own house. As they were sitting together in the garden, when the child was ten years old, Paternus thus began to him.

The little time that you have been in the world, my child, you have spent wholly with me; and my love and tenderness to you, has made you look upon me as your only friend and benefactor, and the cause of all the comfort and pleasure that you enjoy. Your heart, I know, would be ready to break with grief, if you thought this was the last day that I should live with you.

But my child, though you now think yourself mighty happy, because you have hold of my hand, you are now in the hands and under the tender care of a much greater father and friend than I am, whose love to you is far greater than mine, and from whom you receive such blessings as no mortal can give.

That God whom you have seen me daily worship, whom I daily call upon to bless both you and me and all mankind, whose wondrous acts are recorded in those scriptures which you constantly read; that God who created the heavens and the earth, who brought a flood upon the old world, who saved Noah in the ark, who was the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, whom Job blessed and praised in the greatest afflictions, who delivered the Israelites out of the hands of the Egyptians, who was the protector of righteous Joseph, Moses, Joshua and holy Daniel, who sent so many prophets into the world, who sent his Son Jesus Christ to redeem mankind; this God who has done all these great things; who has created so many millions of men, who lived and died before you were born, with whom

the spirits of good men that are departed this life, now live, whom infinite numbers of angels now worship in heaven; this great God who is the creator of worlds, of angels and men, is your loving Father and Friend, your good Creator and nourisher, from whom, and not from me, you received your being ten years ago; at the time that I planted that little tender elm which you there see.

I myself am not half the age of this shady oak, under which we sit; many of our fathers have sat under its boughs, we have all of us called it ours in our turn, though it stands and drops its masters, as it drops its leaves.

You see my son, this wide and large firmament over our heads, where the sun and moon and all the stars appear in their turns. If you were to be carried up to any of these bodies at this vast distance from us, you would still discover others as much above you, as the stars that you see here are above the earth. Were you to go up or down, east or west, north or south, you would find the same height without any top, and the same depth without any bottom.

And yet, my child, so great is God, that all these bodies, added together, are but as a grain of sand in his sight. And yet you are as much the care of this great God and Father of all worlds and all spirits, as if he had no son but you, or there was no creature for him to love and protect but you alone. He numbers the hairs of your head, watches over you sleeping or waking, and has preserved you from a thousand dangers which neither you nor I know any thing of.

How poor my power is, and how little I am able to do for you, you have often seen. Your late sickness has shewn you, how little I could do for you in that state, and the frequent pains in your head are plain proofs, that I have no power to remove them.

I can bring you food and medicines, but have no power to turn them into your relief and nourishment. It is God alone can do this for you.

Therefore, my child, fear and worship, and love God. Your eyes indeed cannot yet see him; but every thing that you see, are so many marks of his power and presence, and he is nearer to you than any thing that you can see.

Take him for your Lord, and Father, and Friend; look up unto him as the fountain and cause of all the good that you have received through my hands; and reverence me only as the bearer and minister of God's good things unto you. And he that blessed my father before I was born, will bless you when I am dead.

Your youth and little mind are only yet acquainted with my family, and therefore you think there is no happiness out of it.

But my child, you belong to a greater family than mine; you are a young member of the family of this Almighty Father of all nations, who has created infinite orders of angels, and numberless generations of men, to be fellow members of one and the same society in heaven.

You do well to reverence and obey my authority, because God has given me power over you, to bring you up in his fear, and to do for you as the holy fathers recorded in scripture did for their children, who are now in rest and peace with God.

I shall in a short time die, and leave you to God and yourself, and if God forgiveth my sins, I shall go to his Son Jesus Christ, and live amongst patriarchs and prophets, saints and martyrs; where I shall pray for you, and hope for your safe arrival at the same place. Therefore, my child, meditate on these great things, and your soul will soon grow great and noble by so meditating upon them.

Let your thoughts often leave these gardens, these fields and farms, to contemplate upon God and heaven, to consider upon angels, and the spirits of good men living in light and glory.

As you have been used to look to me in all your actions, and have been afraid to do any thing unless you first know my will, so let it now be a rule of your life, to look

up to God in all your actions, to do every thing in his fear, and to abstain from every thing that is not according to his will.

Bear him always in your mind, teach your thoughts to reverence him in every place; for there is no place where he is not.

God keepeth a book of life, wherein all the actions of all men are written. Your name is there, my child, and when you die, this book will be laid open before men and angels; and according as your actions are there found, you will either be received to the happiness of those holy men who have died before you, or be turned away amongst wicked spirits, that are never to see God any more.

Never forget this book, my son; for it is written, it must be opened, you must see it, and you must be tried by it. Strive therefore, to fill it with your good deeds, that the hand writing of God may not appear against you.

God, my child, is all love, and wisdom, and goodness; and every thing that he has made, and every action that he does, is the effect of them all. Therefore, you cannot please God, but so far as you strive to walk in love, wisdom, and goodness. As all wisdom, love and goodness proceed from God, so nothing but love, wisdom, and goodness can lead to God.

When you love that which God loves, you act with him, you join yourself to him; and when you love what he dislikes, then you oppose him, and separate yourself from him. This is the true and the right way; think what God loves, and do you love it with all your heart.

First of all, my child, worship and adore God. Think of him magnificently, speak of him reverently, magnify his providence, adore his power, frequent his service, and pray unto him frequently and constantly.

Next to this, love your neighbour, which is all mankind, with such tenderness and affection as you love yourself. Think how God loves all mankind, how merciful he is to them, how tender he is of them, how carefully he

preserves them, and then strive to love the world, as God loves it.

God would have all men to be happy; therefore do you *will*, and desire the same. All men are great instances of divine love, therefore let all men be instances of your love.

But above all, my son, mark this. Never do any thing through strife, or envy, or emulation, or vain glory. Never do any thing in order to excel other people; but in order to please God, and because it is his will that you should do every thing in the best manner that you can.

For if it is once a pleasure to you to excel other people, it will by degrees be a pleasure to you to see other people not so good as yourself.

Banish, therefore, every sort of self-pride and self-distinction, and accustom yourself to rejoice in all the excellencies and perfections of your fellow creatures, and be as glad to see any of their good actions as your own.

For God is as well pleased with their well doings as with yours; so you ought to desire that every thing that is wise, and holy, and good may be performed in as high a manner by other people, as by yourself.

Let this, therefore, be your only motive and spur to all good actions, honest industry and business, to do every thing in as perfect and excellent a manner as you can, for this only reason, because it is pleasing to God, who desires your perfection, and writes all your actions in a book.

When I am dead, my son, you will be master of all my estate, which will be a great deal more than the necessities of one family will require. Therefore, as you are to be charitable to the souls of men, and wish them the same happiness with you in heaven, so be charitable to their bodies, and endeavour to make them as happy as you can upon earth.

As God has created all things for the common good of all men, so let that part of them which has fallen to your share, be employed as God would have all employed, for the common good of all.

Do good, my son ; first of all to those who most deserve it ; but remember to do good to all. The greatest sinners receive daily instances of God's goodness towards them. He nourishes and preserves them, that they may repent and return to him ; do you, therefore, imitate God ; and think no one too bad to receive your relief and kindness when you see that he wants it.

I am teaching you latin and greek ; and that you should desire to be a great critic, a fine poet, or an eloquent orator. I would not have your heart feel any of these desires ; for the desire of these accomplishments is a vanity of the mind ; and the masters of them are, generally, vain men. For the desire of any thing that is not a real good lessens the application of the mind after that which is so.

But I teach you these languages, that at proper times you may look into the history of past ages, and learn the methods of God's providence over the world ; that reading the writings of the ancient sages, you may see how wisdom and virtue have been the praise of great men of all ages, and fortify your mind by their wise sayings.

Let truth and plainness, therefore, be the only ornament of your language, and study nothing but how to think of all things as they deserve : to choose every thing that is best, to live according to reason and order, and to act in every part of your life in conformity to the will of God.

Study how to fill your heart full of the love of God, and the love of your neighbour : and then be content to be no deeper a scholar, no finer a gentleman, than these tempers will make you. As true religion is nothing else but simple nature governed by right reason, so it loves and requires great plainness and simplicity of life. Therefore avoid all superfluous show of finery and equipage, and let your house be plainly furnished with moderate conveniences. Do not consider what your estate can afford, but what right reason requires.

Let your dress be sober, clean, and modest; not to set out the beauty of your person; but to declare the sobriety of your mind; that your outward garb may resemble the inward plainness and simplicity of your heart. For it is highly reasonable that you should be one man, all of a piece, and appear outwardly such as you are inwardly.

As to your meat and drink, in them observe the highest rules of christian temperance and sobriety; consider your body only as the servant and minister of your soul; and only so nourish it as may best perform an humble and obedient service to it.

But, my son, observe this as a most principal thing, which I shall remember you of as long as I live with you.

Hate and despise all human glory; for it is nothing else but human folly. It is the greatest snare, and the greatest betrayer that you can possibly admit into your heart.

Love humility in all its instances; practise it in all its parts; for it is the noblest state of the soul of man. It will set your heart and affections right towards God, and fill you with every temper that is tender and affectionate towards men.

Let every day, therefore, be a day of humility; condescend to all the weakness and infirmities of your fellow-creatures; cover their frailties, love their excellencies, encourage their virtues, relieve their wants, rejoice in their prosperity, compassionate their distress, receive their friendship, overlook their unkindness, forgive their malice, be a servant of servants, and condescend to do the lowest offices to the lowest of mankind.

Aspire after nothing but your own purity and perfection: and have no ambition, but to do everything in so reasonable and religious a manner, that you may be *glad* that God is every where present, and sees and observes all your actions. The greatest trial of humility is an humble behaviour towards your equals in age, estate and condition

of life. Therefore, be careful of all the motions of your heart towards these people. Let all your behaviour towards them be governed by unfeigned love. Have no desire to put any of your equals below you, nor any anger at those that would put themselves above you. If they are proud, they are ill of a very bad distemper; let them therefore have your tender pity; perhaps your meekness may prove an occasion of their cure. But if your humility should do them no good, it will, however, be the greatest good that you can do to yourself.

Remember there is but one man in the world, with whom you are to have perpetual contention, and be always striving to exceed him; and that is yourself.

The time of practising these precepts, my child, will soon be over with you. The world will soon slip through your hands, or rather, you will soon slip through it. It seems but the other day that I received these same instructions from my dear father, that I am now leaving with you. And the God that gave me ears to hear, and a heart to receive what my father said unto me, will, I hope, give you grace to love and follow the same instructions.

Thus did Paternus educate his son."—*Law's serious Call to a devout and holy life. Chapter 18.*

INTRODUCTION.

"And he was called the Friend of God."

JAMES ii. 23.

ALL men talk of the excellence and pleasure of Friendship, but how few are acquainted with it in this its noblest kind and happiest exercise ! The Friend of God is an appellation that would do an infinite honour to the most glorious angel ; but it was given to a man like ourselves ; and to stamp the justice of the name and the reality of the character, he was styled so by God himself, ' Abraham my friend.'* Yes, the lofty soul that is thus characterized by its Friendship with Deity, was a sojourner in mortal flesh ; and it was amidst all the disadvantages of frail humanity, that it maintained such pure and exalted intercourse with God as to be denominated God's Friend. A singular and a matchless title, which the everlasting gospel, wherein it is recorded, shall perpetuate to the end of the world. Let us hear this with a pious and a generous emulation, and hence form a truer and a higher notion of what, even in the present state we are capable of being and enjoying.

* Isaiah xli. 8

Friendship with God is an incomparable theme, this includes every idea of majesty and devotion, and is above all human composures : here a celestial creature might preach, and all the sons of glory might attentively and joyfully hear ; however, the transcendent dignity of this subject does not forbid its being handled in our imperfect way ; nor must we decline to give it our best consideration, though no tongue or pen of man can come up to the grandeur and sublimity of it.

The ministers of religion should live to the same end for which Christ died : viz :—the bringing men to God—to the knowledge, love, and fellowship of him in this world, as the beginning of their complete and final blessedness in his communion and presence in the world to come : to serve this great end to the best of my power, I have compiled this Treatise ; the design of which is to recommend an humble and habitual intercourse with the Deity, as the essence of religion, and the source of rational and permanent happiness.

FRIENDSHIP WITH GOD.

CHAPTER I.

OF FRIENDSHIP IN GENERAL.

FRIENDSHIP has always been held a dear and sacred name ; and reckoned a necessary article of human happiness ; we find it in different forms and degrees every where, and men affect it for their credit as well as their comfort, nothing being thought more disgraceful than to want friends.

No elevation of rank can set mankind above its sweetness and use. Kings have laid aside their crowns and robes of state to indulge to its familiar exercises ; Alexander conquered the world, and when he had done would have found it a wilderness, had it not been for such a friend as his Ephestion. The man whose ambition and selfishness would have grasped the whole world, could nevertheless acknowledge another self in his friend.*

* Ephestion accompanying Alexander to the tent of Darius, was by some of the captives mistaken for Alexander ; apology being made for the misplaced homage, the Conqueror answered, " Indeed you were not deceived, for he also is Alexander."

The nearest and dearest relations in life cannot supersede it. To the beloved names of father, wife, child, or nephew, that of friend must also be added, to make the sum of our social bliss complete.

Philosophy cannot over-rule our propensity to it, or give us a substitute for it. Seneca, stoic as he was, could expatiate upon the blessings of friendship, lay himself open to the impressions and seek his relief in the several offices of it, and Cicero and Pliny do to this day charm the world with what are no other than its pure and genuine effusions.

The barbarous Scythian has felt its power as well as the polished Greek, and with the usual energy and spiritedness of Lucian, is made to contend, not only for the *reality*, but for the *supremacy* of it too, in his own rude and uncivilized nation. The people, whose sword or bow was their greatest deity, could yet pay divine honours to Friendship; they invoked her as a goddess; they built to her a temple; they charged the duties of Friendship upon their children at her sacred shrine; and placed amongst the gods such as had distinguished themselves by breathing the spirit and fulfilling the obligations of it.

Friendship has always been the strongest in the best minds, and has led to effects that are almost incredible. What self-denial, what endurance of hardship, what fortitude in danger, what defiance of death has not Friendship produced?—

indeed it is next to faith, that sublime principle so divinely celebrated in the scriptures ; it is next to faith for the contempt of the world which it has inspired—the superiority to all partial and selfish attachments which it has created—for the arduous tasks that have been undertaken—and the benevolent sacrifices that have been made under the influence of it.

It is the delight of sanguine youth and the prop of tottering age, without it prosperity has no bloom ; and with it adversity is no burden. *A friend is borne for adversity* ; the anxious heart expands at his approach, and the tear ceases at affliction's eye.

Next to the providence of God, the bosom of a friend is our asylum, and his council our guide amidst the dangers and difficulties of this exposed and struggling state ; and therefore the wisest of men, he who wrote vanity of vanities, all is vanity, upon every thing else in this world, charges a perseverance in Friendship upon us, as our readiest and best resource. 'Thine own friend and thy father's friend forsake not.'*

Solitariness has always been reckoned unnatural where it is affected and an infelicity where it is forced. This made Adam's condition imperfect and his very paradise defective in the estimation of God himself, he who said of all his other works that they were very good ; also declaring that it was not good for man to be alone.† With the

* Proverbs xxvii. 10.

† Genesis ii. 18.

joys of innocence, the pleasures of intelligence, the plenty of Eden, the works and wonders of a stately and beautiful world to entertain his admiring eyes, and the condescending visits of its bounteous Creator to his terrestrial abode—his blessedness was said to be unfinished till he had a companion, a partner, and sharer of all. And if Adam wanted society, notwithstanding all the perfection with which he came out of his Maker's hands, and wanted it in that lovely garden where the Lord God placed him, and where he saw nothing but what invited to peace, reflection and devotion, how much more must we want it in this reduced state of things?—now that both the world and human nature have experienced so sad a change—how necessary is Friendship to us who have so many disorders within us to disturb our quiet, and so many dangers without to destroy our security?—who see the earth abound with disappointments and distresses and cannot help apprehending that we must have our portion of them. If the first man wanted it who was happy in every thing else, how necessary must it be to us who are comparatively happy in nothing else.

Above all does it argue the superior excellence of Friendship that it was the grand *solamen* of the Son of God himself, when he dignified and blessed our world with his presence. Sensual pleasures he took no delight in—all the objects of covetousness and ambition were infinitely beneath him—

but the recreation of a rational and moral Friendship, this he honoured our earth by accepting at its hands to the renunciation of every thing else it could offer him.

‘I have called you friends,’* said he to his disciples;—his mind was perfect light, his will was exact rectitude, his affections were elevated and heavenly—his breast the seat of serenity and purity; and the Father was so constantly with him that he was never alone, and yet notwithstanding all these divine essentials of blessedness within him, he disdained not that gratification which virtuous Friendship affords; he cultivated it with his twelve apostles in the most intimate manner, and in his last conferences with them (when there was the special endearment of mutual affliction), there are such delicate sentiments and touches of Friendship discernible, as create at this distant day the most tender and pleasing emotion; and exhibit the finest pattern of a kind, a generous, and a sympathizing heart.—Of the twelve apostles, three † were allowed a greater familiarity with him than the rest, and were admitted into his most retired privacies, and of these, one was especially distinguished and has his name handed down to us with this divine encomium—‘the disciple whom Jesus loved.’ ‡

In the case of the beloved family at Bethany, let the tears of our sensibility and genuine feeling

* John xv. 16.

† Peter, James, and John.

‡ John xiii. 23.

attest the Friendship of the Redeemer's heart. To enlarge upon that interesting tale would be only to enfeeble ; thanks for that teacher and example of philanthropy, who in the plenitude of his Master's spirit has placed him before us at the grave of Lazarus.

From this short view of the excellence and importance of Friendship, who would not wish to experience it in its highest possible improvements, and, if the distance between heaven and earth should be found not to forbid it, to cultivate it with nobler beings and higher intelligences. But is Friendship with God to be had ?

CHAPTER II.

OF FRIENDSHIP WITH GOD.

‘WILL God, in very deed dwell with men on the earth,’* was the exclamation of a mighty monarch, an exclamation not of doubt, but of joyful amazement—he had that just sense of the transcendent greatness of the God of heaven which annihilates all human distinctions, and had not as yet degenerated into those low and paltry notions of Deity that prepared him for his mean and impious idolatries.

That divine condescension which is here exhibited for the delight and astonishment of the world, is confirmed to us by the lips of our gracious Saviour, ‘If any man keep my words, my Father will love him, and we will come unto him and make our abode with him.’† Agreeable to what is elsewhere said by that very apostle who has recorded this wonderful declaration of his blessed Master, ‘he that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son.’‡ He hath

* 11 Chronicles vi. 18.

† John xiv. 23.

‡ 11 John, 9 ver.

the favor, the good-will, of both. If these words do not import Friendship none can.

Friendship amongst men arises from some or all of these four things. I.—From our natural propensity to society and mutual converse. Man is a sociable creature, and his qualifications for society shew that he was intended for it. II.—From the pleasure of communicating our sentiments and endearments to one another. Without an opportunity of doing this,* the improvements of the understanding and the virtues of the heart would yield but a diminished satisfaction. III.—Our dependence upon one another is a further rise of Friendship. It belongs to God alone to be independent and to need nothing out of himself for his own happiness; he communicates his happiness to his creatures but cannot increase it. IV.—Another source of Friendship amongst men, is the discovery of some amiable qualities in them; these catch the heart before we are aware, and carry it away into all the interests, delights, and pleasures of the beloved object; determining our propensity to society in general, to some special objects of peculiar delight. These are the secret bands that hold the civil world together, and the ordinary grounds of Friendship amongst men.

* Si quis in cœlum ascendisset, naturamque mundi, et pulchritudinem siderum perspexisset, insuavem illam admirationem ei fore, quæ jucundissima fulset, si aliquem, cui narraret, habuisset. Sic natura solitarium nihil amat, semperque ad aliquod tanquam adminiculum annitur: quod in amicissimo quoque dulcissimum est.

Now each of these has something of a parallel in Friendship with God. The friend of God discerns his supreme and original excellence. The pleasure of mutual communication is maintained by goodness on God's part, and by devout affections on the part of his friend. The sense of his dependence upon God commands his reverence, and that dependence answered, inflames his gratitude; and his enlightened and rectified spirit affects divine converse with an ease and nature, like that, with which men affect and slide into each others converses and Friendship. The upright love him.

The nature and the several expressions of Friendship with God, will be more particularly stated in a subsequent chapter of this Treatise; at present, I may define it in these few words—'It is the reverent, adoring, grateful, and dutiful behaviour of man to God, and God's favour and complacency in and towards man; together with man's pleasing apprehension and persuasion of this.'

I. And this was the original state of man, he was obedient and God was friendly. Rebellion on the one part, and displeasure on the other. came in afterwards and were not from the beginning. God made man for Friendship with himself: 'Let us make man,' said he, 'in our own image!'^{*} and why in his own image, but for his own communion? This mode of consultation at the

^{*} Genesis i. 26.

production of man, and express mention of the divine pattern after which he should be formed, indicated the noble purpose and view of the Creator, in the existence he was about to bestow upon him ; I will have a creature in the world, my hand has just formed, that shall be a partaker of my intelligence and capable of my converse, that shall adore my perfections and bless me for my works ; that shall lift up to me an admiring and grateful eye, and that shall receive my visits and benefits with mental satisfaction and pleasure. And while man continued in honour it was so ; from heaven to Adam's paradise was a frequented road, and God and his new-formed creature met with mutual delight, till transgression induced separation and that separation induced misery ; the same offence that deprived man of God's company making him most unhappy in his own. Man opposed forbidden appetite to wise and reasonable law. There the quarrel began, which is to this day perpetuated in the same manner by all the impenitent and incorrigible part of his offspring.

But this Friendship was as mercifully restored as it was freely formed.

God sought the fugitive, he had fled from his duty and his happiness, and was endeavouring to fly from himself. In the cool of the day (the emblem of abated wrath*), he came to deal with

* The pleasing turn of Dr. Grosvenor.

his fallen creature, and tendered him a blessing, (the comprehensive blessing he had lost), when he was vainly endeavouring to hide himself from a curse and accosted him with a promise, the developement and accomplishment of which make up our gospel, which is all comprized in the glad tidings that 'God is in Christ reconciling the world unto himself.' * God preached this doctrine to Adam, and the everlasting gospel preaches it to his apostate children through their several generations. This leads me to another remark :

II.—As Friendship with God was the primitive state of man so the restoration of that Friendship is the grand design of the gospel.

The Gospel invites us unto this Friendship—it solemnly charges it upon us—be ye reconciled unto God ; † assuring us that God has done all that was necessary to be done by way of sacrifice and ransom for the making such Friendship real and permanent. 'Be ye reconciled unto God—for he hath made him to be sin for us who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.' ‡ Now, says the Apostle, let God's disposition to Friendship (herein wonderfully expressed), engage your's. If you really see the guilt and feel the infelicity of distance and enmity, let God's overtures for nearness and Friendship, manifested by the gift of his Son for a mediator, excite your desire and encourage your hope thereof. By the gospel we learn that God

* II Corinthians v. 19. † II Cor. v. 20. ‡ II Cor. v. 21.

sent his Son into the world and lifted him up upon a cross, that he might draw all men unto himself—that he might powerfully work upon the ingenuity and gratitude of his revolted progeny, and that after such a display of his heavenly benevolence, none might continue at a disrespectful and ruinous distance from him.

Let us value and honour the gospel, for this its high and merciful design. It is that whereby God is bringing home his banished, and gathering together into one happy body all his children that are scattered abroad. It is that dispensation whereby he is endeavouring to reclaim the prodigal, soften the obdurate, conciliate such as are disaffected to his government, and encourage such as are for returning to the discipline of it. It is the mean whereby God works for rooting out of his human creation all enmity to him and his laws, and in a proportionate degree all misery. So far as its doctrines have their proper influence, its proposals accepted, and its spirit prevalent, man is restored to the honour and happiness of his first estate, and the world is a paradise not entirely lost. As it is the dignity of human nature that we are capable of Friendship with God, so it is the excellency of Christianity, when embraced, that it puts us into the possession of it. Well may the gospel be styled a high calling with a rational and commendable boasting may we take up St. Paul's words—'Ye see your calling, brethren;'^{*} an honourable calling as well as an holy,

^{*} 1 Corinthians i. 26.

casting a lustre upon our apostate world, brightening the obscurity, and ennobling the meanness of any condition in it.

III.—As it is the design of christianity to restore that Friendship with Deity, which was the glory of man's original state, so such Friendship is described as actually restored wherever christianity is cordially received. 'As many as received him (i. e. Jesus Christ) to them,' says the evangelist, 'he gave power to become the sons of God, even to them that believed in his name.'* And in the relation of sons of God, the friendship of God must be included. By escaping the pollutions that are in the world through lusts, in obedience to the authority, and in conformity to the spirit of the gospel, we are said to become partakers of the divine nature,† and if we have the nature of God, we must have the Friendship of God—for God cannot but love his own image and the persons in whom it is found. By cultivating the temper of love, which is above all others the temper of the gospel, we are said to dwell in God, and to have God dwelling in us.‡ An expression which imports Friendship in the very highest degree. The apostle whose these words are, has elsewhere this wonderful expression—'Our fellowship is with the Father, as well as with his Son Jesus Christ.'|| And to close this article, if in obedience to the commands and under the

* John i. 12.

† 1 John iv. 16.

‡ 11 Peter i. 4.

|| 1 John i. 3.

influence of the promises of the gospel, we come out from a profane world, cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of flesh and spirit, and perfect holiness in the fear of God, God will receive us, and be a Father unto us, and we shall be sons and daughters to the Lord Almighty. 'He will dwell in us and walk in us, and be to us a God, and we shall be to him a people.'* Is not this Friendship?

* II Corinthians vi. 16.

CHAPTER III.

OF FRIENDSHIP ON GOD'S PART, OR THAT GOD
IS A FRIEND TO US.

THIS is the voice of nature and scripture, the language of heaven and earth, and the uniform testimony of every creature, the most glorious and excellent God addresses us by each and says—'call me Friend.' This should inspire us with joy and confidence, and make the strongest and grandest impressions upon our spirits.

Creation arose from his boundless benignity and is therefore one imperfect expression of it. I know not what lovelier thought can enter the heart of man than is conveyed by the hymn of the celestials—'Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power, for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created.'* It was the pleasure of God that his immense and boundless goodness should issue in such a creation as this. In his eternal

* Revelations iv. 11.

and all comprehensive mind he formed a fair and well furnished world—calling things that were not as though they were ; and, amongst the rest of the creatures with which it should be replenished, designed one nobler than the others, who should be capable of knowing who made both him and them, of contemplating the glorious excellences of his Maker, and of partaking a felicity in him, as well as a being from him ; with what a captivating spirit of benevolence is the great God described as planning this earth which we inhabit, measuring the waters, meteing out the land * and spreading his line upon it †—the expressions denote both contrivance and complacency, and according to the beauteous model which his goodness drew—up rose the world at his Almighty fiat. The lofty Isaiah, magnifying the power and wisdom of God in creation, asks, ‘ Who being his counsellor has instructed Him’ ‡ in this amazing work ? I add, creation is all his own in point of beneficence, as well as wisdom and power—all must be resolved into the good pleasure of his goodness ; § all is *proprio motu*, unsolicited, unmerited, unrewarded goodness.

The creation of man especially displays the benignity of God. It is displayed in his very frame. David admired at his own structure as an indication of divine goodness and therefore commanding praise as well as wonder, ‘ I will

* Isaiah xl. 12.

+ Job xxxviii. 5.

‡ Isaiah xl, 13.

† II Thessalonians i. 11.

praise thee, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; marvellous are thy works and that my soul knoweth right well,* &c. How precious also are thy thoughts unto me, &c. And Job with apparent reverence of himself, though a greater reverence of his Maker, prefaces his admiring contemplation of his own form and figure with this declaration—‘Thy hands have made me and fashioned me together round about.’† This is not barely an asseveration thou hast done it, but it is a magnifying God’s work :—“None but thou couldest have made so excellent a creature and it is thy goodness that thou hast.” And as the frame of man, so the original disposal of him shewed his Maker’s Friendship to him. ‘The Lord God planted a garden eastward in Eden;’ and there he put the man that he had made.‡ This conveys the notion of especial fruitfulness, beauty, and use.—Of a spot, distinguished first by the divine eye, and then by the divine culture and bounty—here is a kind of preparation on God’s part, as it should seem for the introduction of a favourite, and what must be man’s admiration at himself, and confidence in his God, when walking forth in strength and beauty, and with a portion of his Maker’s intelligence and majesty, his eye beheld and appropriated the charming scene? the inspiration of the Almighty whispering within him—all this is made for me.

* Psalm cxxxix. 14.

+ Job x. 8.

‡ Genesis ii. 8.

After his transgression God prolonged his life, though he had forfeited that, as well as his paradise; and immediately began to shew mercy in a way suited to his sunk and degraded condition. The first instance of such mercy was his promise of a Saviour.* Another remarkable and engaging instance of it was his securing, by express law, the lives of mankind from the fury and wickedness of one another. How soon was disobedience to heaven followed by every kind of outrage upon earth? How soon was the cry of violence heard in the tents of Adam's progeny?—They doing violence to each other, as he had already done violence, both to his God and to himself!—in this sad state God might have left them to be their own executioners, till the race should have become extinct by means of the same undisciplined and excessive passions that first insulted him. But instead of thus renouncing all care of a rebellious race of beings, he interposed with his positive law against murder, delivered in terms, the condescension and love of which are sufficient to work upon the worst of men.

‘At the hand of man, at the hand of every man's brother will I require the life of man. Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed; for in the image of God made he Man’† This is truly interesting—the very ground of this law was man's enmity to his own species, as well as to the author of it; which manifested him to

* Genesis iii. 15.

† Genesis ix. 5, 6.

have now become a most depraved creature. Yet, says the benevolent Creator, I will acknowledge the natural image of me that he yet bears, though he has lost the moral, sunk as he is, he is a god-like creature still—god-like even in his ruins, and therefore shall not be touched with impunity. What is this but Friendship—Friendship to man, expressly considered as depraved and rebellious.

Of the same Friendly nature with this express and positive law, are those strong, though invisible restraints, which God has laid upon the spirits of men, and by which they are usually held under, and kept from injuring and destroying one another. There are impressions left upon the nature of man, which are called the laws of nature. St. Paul intimates, that for their strength and clearness, they are sufficient for us both to be governed and judged by : now these were all written upon our hearts by the finger of the great legislator ; and as the tendency of them is to keep the world in peace and order, they must be acknowledged so many marks of his care and concern for his creature man ; that his dwelling in this world may be made safe and secure unto him.

With these laws of God, his providence operates for the preservation and happiness of men ; and hence his friendly disposition towards them further appears. The vast variety of creatures that fill this world continually, receive from his liberality. The eyes of all wait upon him, and

he satisfies the desire of every living thing, he understands the asking look of each and grants the expected supply. Not a sparrow is forgotten before God, he feeds the inferior creatures that they may minister unto man, to his necessities, and to his entertainments, so that in the issue all the tender mercies of God that are over all his works do terminate in us, and we may say of every thing that pleases us, either for beauty or use, that is mercy to me—another effort of the Creator's kindness to make my stay in this world agreeable and happy to me.

He continues our breath and gives us our bread in a continual succession from day to day. He maketh his sun to arise on the evil and the good, and sendeth his rain on the just and on the unjust, and all under the character of our Father which is in heaven. He gives his benefits where he is not received with them, amongst the evil and the unthankful, they enter the doors that are shut against the divine benefactor—'they say unto God, depart from us, and yet he fills their houses with good things.* Shew me the friend besides that will continue his bounty and be constantly overlooked.

Let us bring the matter home to ourselves, and see if God is not a friend to us; what is it we eat—what is it we drink—what is it that clothes, warms us, and delights us—are not all these the vouchsafements of our divine benefactor;

* Job xxii. 17, 18.

that while we are candidates for a better world, we may not feel necessity in this? There is nothing in our houses—nothing in our possession, but we may each of us write upon it—*Donum Amici Cælestis*—the gift of my great and heavenly Friend, who indeed giveth all things richly to enjoy: one of whose titles is Father of Lights, and Author of every good gift, and every perfect gift to the children of men. He gives all with the purest benignity of intention—not to ensnare us, but to bless us to the utmost; when it happens otherwise, the cause and the blame are in ourselves; we put a sting to the honey of his blessings, and a thorn to the rose of those delights which he sends us. And God gives with pleasure to himself as well as with pure benignity to us—and this evinces Friendship to us to the highest degree; how incomparably captivating is the sentiment conveyed in the following line—‘thou art good’ and doest good.’* Thou doest good of thine own will and pleasure, and because it is thy very nature. This, as I said before, is called—the good pleasure of his goodness;† a complacency in the several exertions of it, both as previously designed and as actually conferred—thou art good and doest good.

His friendly counsels guide us—his friendly bounty supplies us—his friendly rebukes awaken and correct us ‘as many as I love, I rebuke and chasten’‡ it is his friendly visitation that pre-

* Psalm cxix. 68.

† 11 Thessalonians i. 11.

‡ Revelations iii. 19.

serves our spirits—it is his presence and power that keeps us from danger, or delivers us out of it. ‘He is with us in six troubles and in seven’—he carries us through all our uncertainties—is better to us than our fears—and is a rock higher than we are when our hearts are overwhelmed within us. Able to do for us exceedingly, abundantly, above all that we can ask or think. In sickness he is near us—in death he is with us ; he delivers us from both, or causes that neither shall do us any harm.

When death has even begun to triumph in his spoil, and set up his pale standard upon the out-works, in token that he had so far carried the place—when the blood has forsaken our cheeks, and been retreating to our hearts—how often has our divine Friend stepped in to our relief—and as the Almighty Preserver of men, stopped the conflict and the agony, restored the dying pulse, braced the trembling nerve, reddened the white and quivering lip, and displayed afresh the ensigns of life ; so that we instantly found ourselves the living—the living to praise him ; and have perhaps, since then, been enabled, through his mercy, to look down with pleasure into that very grave that we once thought so frightful and terrifying.

And in the whole interim between such our temporary deliverance from death, and our finally submitting to the stroke of it, we have the friendly promise of God to sweeten life, and to

ensure the safety of it unto us. These are the staff in our hands—the cordial to our hearts—the stay of our spirits in a fainting hour—our constant food and real treasure.—‘I will never leave thee nor forsake thee.’*—‘To your old age, and hoary hairs will I carry you.’†—‘I am thy shield and thine exceeding great reward.’‡—‘Because he hath set his love upon me, therefore will I deliver him; I will set him on high because he hath known my name. I will be with him in trouble; I will deliver him and honour him.’||

But what shall we say to it when, besides his protection, his counsels, his promises, and his various bounties, we recollect that he has given us his very self in the person of his divine and blessed Son! Is not this Friendship, both in the most unquestionable reality and in the highest degree of it? One of the poets hath an ingenious fancy to express the passion wherewith he found himself overcome after a long resistance.—That the God of love had shot all his golden arrows at him, but could never pierce his heart, till at last he put himself into the bow and darted himself straight into his breast. This doth some way adumbrate God’s dealings with men, he had long contended with a stubborn world, and thrown down many a blessing upon mortals; and when all his other gifts could not prevail, he at last made a gift of himself, to testify his affection and

* Hebrews xiii. 5.

† Isaiah xli. 4.

‡ Genesis xv. 1.

|| Psalm xci. 14.

engage theirs.* 'God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life.'† Herein is love, no false pretence, no fictitious counterfeit but the true substance, the superlative degree of it, 'that God sent his Son to be a propitiation for us.'‡

And this gift of his Son is a permanent gift—permanent in respect of its benefit and use. Though he was offered *once for all*, it was not for one age or nation only. On account of his most precious oblation, made more than eighteen hundred years ago, I may say to each of you, as Christ to the publican, 'this day is salvation come to thine house'§—and how excellent is this salvation in its nature, how free in its offers, how reasonable in its conditions, yea, how reasonable has God always been in his requirements from men, under dispensations prior to the gospel, what a merciful acceptance of them has he testified amidst all their imperfections, and what a readiness to recompense anything good in the meanest and guiltiest of his creatures! 'If thou doest well shalt thou not be accepted,'§ was his language to a very Cain. Is not this the language of Friendship to sinners; sufficient to remove the burthen of past guilt, and to inspire with resolution and courage for better endeavours?

But to put this matter out of all possible

* Scougal's Life of God.

† John iii. 16.

‡ John iv. 10.

§ Luke xix. 9.

‡ Genesis iv. 7.

doubt, viz. God's disposition to Friendship with man, be it remembered that God has always had his Friends in our world;—Enoch, the seventh from Adam, 'walked with God.' * which imports together with his piety towards God, God's Friendship and favour to him.

As to Abraham, God is represented as coming to his house, communing with him, and imparting to him the awful and majestic designs of his providence; so he communicated his desolating judgments upon the wicked cities, the temporary hell that he was about to kindle upon earth, thereby manifesting the most engaging condescension and confidence on his part, and affording to Abraham an opportunity of addressing him in one of the finest forms of intercession that is anywhere to be met with, and which, for the proportionate honours it does to the purity, mercy and grandeur of God, may be held forth to imitation for ever.

When the fiery vengeance was ready to descend, God notified it to Lot by an embassy of angels, who with a friendly violence drew him from his dwelling, and hastened him beyond the limits of the accursed plain;—assigning as the cause, that, impatient as destruction was of receiving her commission, they could do nothing till he was departed. † So did one just person suspend the judgment of incensed heaven; rather than one Friend of God should be destroyed, the cities of his adversaries have an undeserved respite.

* Genesis v. 24.

† Genesis xix. 22.

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What a testimony does God bear to Job, and in what wonderful terms acknowledge him for a friend ! asserting and vindicating the excellence of his character before men and devils—‘ Hast thou considered my servant Job, that there is none like him upon the earth, a perfect man, and an upright, one that feareth God and escheweth evil ?’* ‘ Go to my servant Job, and my servant Job shall pray for you, for him will I accept ; least I deal with you after your folly,’†—what an acceptableness of this man to God is here indicated. With Moses, God is said to have spoken ‘ as a man speaketh to his friend.’‡

Daniel had an angel sent to him to assure him of his being dear to heaven ;—‘ O Daniel, a man greatly beloved,’ § was the honorable mode of salutation.

And to shew his high estimation of Noah and Samuel, as well as of Job, Moses and Daniel ; the Almighty thus declares—‘ *As I live* (a solemn preface, never used but upon grand and awful occasions), though Moses and Samuel stood before me, my mind could not be towards this people.’ § ‘ Though these three men Noah, Daniel and Job were in the land, they should deliver only their own souls.’ ¶ God had bid Moses let him alone that he might destroy the idolatrous Israelites—the man of God prayed and interceded, and prevented the ruin.** ‘ Samuel prayed and sacrificed,

* Job i. 8. † Job xlii. 8. ‡ Exodus xxxiii. 2.

§ Daniel x. 2. ¶ Jeremiah xv. 1. ¶ Ezekiel xiv. 14.

** Exodus xxxii. 9.

and the Lord thundered upon the Philistines and discomfited them.' * But now, their prayers are denied this power and prevalence, 'though Moses and Samuel stood before me—though these three men, Noah, Daniel and Job were in the land, their righteousness should deliver only their own souls.' How could the piety of these men and their interest with God on the one hand, as well as Judah's unpardonable wickedness on the other, have been set forth in more expressive words.

And now, what is the inference from all this, what but that as the heaven does not confine God in his Friendships, the earth should not confine *us* in *ours*. And since heaven is described as the place of his most glorious residence, we should betake ourselves thither, with our affectionate praises, our professions of dependence, our trust, complacency, and all those other virtuous sentiments and habits, which are included in Friendship with God on our part, and the most particular description of which will be the business of the following chapter.

* 1 Samuel vii. 9, 10.

CHAPTER IV.

OF FRIENDSHIP ON OUR PART, OR WHAT MAKES
US FRIENDS OF GOD.

SECTION I.

*Of Reconciliation to God as the foundation of
Friendship with Him.*

FRIENDSHIP with God supposes reconciliation.
—Reconciliation to God his perfections and government.

This reconciliation amongst the Friends of God, implies that there is such a thing as enmity to him in others. And so there is, unnatural and heinous as it appears to us at the first mention; our Saviour charged it upon the Jews. 'They have both seen and hated both me and my father.'* And St. Paul charged it upon the Gentiles. In this black catalogue of offenders he has these—'haters of God.'†

A most dreadful charge is this; it is one which all apprehensive persons should be desirous of purging themselves from; upon hearing that

* John xv. 24.

† Romans i. 30.

there are such monsters of impiety in the world, we should inquire with the interestedness of the apostles on another occasion. Lord are we amongst them ?—‘ is it I ? ’ The atheist would destroy the existence of God ; and this is the very height of enmity, of enmity not to God only but to men too, whom he would by this means rob of all heavenly protection, and of the only sure ground of joy, trust and hope. And this enmity of the atheist both to God and man, appears the more unpardonable and detestable when it is considered for what purpose it is conceived and maintained, viz. that he (the atheist), may enjoy his own guilty security,—that he may live with the sensuality of a brute, or the malignity of a devil, and then die in despair, and have no one to call him to an account. For this worthy end, the world must be without a ruler and man without a God. God must lose his throne, that such a mean wretch may break the orders of it ; and the virtuous part of the creation must lose its heaven, that he may escape his own deserved hell. What is this but the most provoking enmity, first against God, and then against the best interest, the natural hope and the true honour of mankind. And in what a pitiful and sordid selfishness is this enmity founded, God and man, heaven and earth, must all give way, that a child of pride or oppression, of vanity or profaneness, may have his own will and course ; and be free from all wise, reasonable and merciful restraint. The atheist is an enemy to his own

stock and race, as well as to his Maker ; and the opposing of his mischievous and debasing tenets should therefore be made a common interest and cause. 'The fool hath said in his heart, there is no God,'* he is to be opposed on a double account, both as a fool and an adversary.

But enmity to God is not to be confined to the atheist and blasphemer, there is no occasion to deny God, burn the bible, and do an outrage to all that is sacred to become his enemy. The imputation falls upon other characters, the sounds of which do not shock and alarm the mind in an equal manner.

There is the libertine, this man would take the sceptre out of God's hand and control his natural and just authority, whenever any foolish or wicked lust claims to be gratified.

The revengeful man would take the sword out of the hand of God, as the libertine would the sceptre, he would invade the tremendous prerogative which God Almighty exclusively claims;—'Vengeance is mine, I will repay, saith the Lord.'† So far as his own interests go, he would be ruler, judge, and executioner, to the neglect and dethroning of the supreme ruler, the processes of whose government his passion, his humour, or his honor will not let him stay for.

The life of every disobedient person is a continual resistance to the laws and commands of God. And what is resistance but enmity ?

* Psalm xiv. 1.

† Romans xii. 19.

a kind of enmity that is severely threatened and condemned—‘woe be to him that striveth with his Maker.’ *

Among the enemies of God I reckon the hard hearted man, who never knew what it was to do good to men for God’s sake, though often entreated by that very consideration. ‘He that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how shall he love God whom he hath not seen.’ † With such a person all goes into the whirlpool of selfishness: nothing passes his hands by way of gratitude to God or charity to men.

The covetous man’s name is followed with a dreadful appendage: ‘the covetous, whom the Lord abhors.’ ‡ Such declared enmity on God’s part must infer a previous enmity on his. St. Paul proclaims every covetous person an idolater, § and what is such idolatry but enmity; it is giving God’s glory to another, and transferring to gold that reverence, dependence and trust, which are due only to infinite power, perfection and goodness. ‘They say unto gold, thou art my hope, and to the fine gold thou art my confidence.’ This ‘Friendship with the world is enmity with God,’ and God’s enmity is denounced in return.

Besides that covetous men have continual infelicity in their unworthy appetites and misplaced affections, they have God’s curse. They experience their conduct to be irrational and

* Isaiah xlv. 9.

† 1 John iv. 20.

‡ Psalm x. 3.

§ Ephesians v. 5.

unhappy, by their manifold vexations and disappointments; and (what they too little think of), a divine Nemesis pursues it as criminal. This is the recompense they have for their thorny cares and piercing sorrows. 'Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and his heart departeth from the Lord.' *

And what are all unthankful and ungrateful men but enemies of God? St. Paul ranks these also with the very worst of sinners, 'unthankful, ungrateful.' † Their alienation from God increases with the number and value of his favours: they fancy themselves independent, though in fact nothing is their own. 'Lo, their good is not in their own hand,' ‡ and they immediately become insolent. 'We are Lords, they cry, we will come no more unto thee.' § 'Let mean people worship God, we are above it.' Thus are God's benefits and blessings perverted from their proper and intended use. God means to allure men by them to his interest and service, and men take occasion from them to desert his interest and service. He means them as so many motives to obedience, and they disobey with the higher hand.

And what shall we say of the sons of pleasure and dissipation? These are accounted harmless characters, no ones enemies but their own. But the scripture impleads these as the enemies of God too, as their pleasures have that supreme

* Jeremiah xvii. 5.

† II Timothy iii. 2.

‡ Job xxi. 16.

§ Jeremiah ii. 31.

affection which is due to God alone. 'Lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God.'* And can this preference consist with loyalty? Pleasure is their grand and darling object and every obligation of duty to God, every demand of devotion and piety that comes in the way thereof, is readily dispensed with. Are not these men God's enemies as well as their own?

Besides these, there are the 'proud whom God knoweth afar off,' † 'the lying lips that shall be put to silence,' ‡ the false balances and them that hold them, 'which are an abomination unto the Lord,' § 'and the unrighteous that shall not inherit his kingdom.' ¶ But why do I instance in particular classes of offenders. All sin is enmity to God, and every sinner is an enemy, —so St. Paul states the matter.—'Enemies in your minds to God, says he, by wicked works.'** And God is on his part an enemy to sinners, 'angry with the wicked every day.' †† A permanent anger, styled 'the wrath of God abiding on them.' ‡‡

There is no one perfection in God however excellent and admirable but these men are some way or other enemies to, they would disarm him of his power because they know they have incensed it against them and it is too hard for them. They hate the unlimited presence of God, which is the consolation and triumph of the righteous, because it follows them into the secret recesses

* Timothy iii 4. † Psalm cxxxviii. 6. ‡ Psalm xxxi. 18.

§ Proverbs xi. 1. ¶ 1 Corinthians vi. 9. ** Colossians i 21.

†† Psalm vii. 11.

‡‡ John iii. 36.

of their iniquities, they cannot endure his holiness, though it is the ground of confidence in his government, because it is contrary to, and will condemn their unholiness, and as to his very goodness, which they have so much occasion for, and which they sometimes profess to confide in, they are described as treating that with contempt, as well as neglect, it is so cheap and common that they make light of it, to their Maker's displeasure and their own aggravated ruin,—‘they despise the riches of his forbearance and patience, thus treasuring up to themselves wrath against the day of wrath.’* Thus much for the reality of their being enemies to God in the world, and the persons who fall under this unnatural and dreadful denomination. Friendship with God supposes reconciliation to him as its foundation; reconciliation to his existence, perfections, and government, so that we have nothing to object to either, but are perfectly well pleased that there is a God, and that he is such a God as his word describes him.

In order to such reconciliation we must have the following notions of enmity to him:—that it is unreasonable. This constitutes the guilt and torment of hell itself. You cannot say a more characteristic thing of the devil, than that he bears an enmity to God. This made him a devil at first and still keeps him such, let not the children of men, partakers of God's image and sharers of his bounty, resemble this ancient enemy of God

* Romans ii. 4, 5.

and of all righteousness. Moreover we must be aware that enmity to God is ;—

Destructive enmity. Our enmity will provoke his ; and then our ruin is completed. ‘Who can stand before this indignation and who can abide in the fierceness of his anger’*—‘Who will set thorns and briers before me in battle? says he in the lofty spirit of Deity, ‘I would go through them I would burn them together.’† Our Saviour reminds us as an argument for living in the fear and friendship of God, that ‘he can destroy both soul and body in hell :’‡ thereby intimating that he will do so, if he be not revered and loved as he ought to be. And when once we have incensed him against us, consider what an enemy he is capable of proving. His wisdom will discover and despise all our folly. His power has thunderbolts always at hand wherewith to revenge our impotent insults, his very goodness will condemn us for the abuse of it, his truth will accomplish all his threatening, his eye will find us out wherever we go, and, to conclude the melancholy detail, his eternity will be the date of our misery. A man is angry with me, and he dies, but it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.|| Lastly that we may be in full reconciliation with God, such reconciliation as is the ground and beginning of Friendship, let us attend to the several aggravations with which enmity to him is accompanied.

* Nahum i. 6.

† Isaiah xxvii. 4.

‡ Matthew x. 28.

|| Hebrews x. 31.

To be an enemy to God is to hate the light and love darkness rather, for God is the *Father of Lights*, it is to loathe beauty, disrelish harmony, to fly in the face of goodness and patience, and to be averse to perfection itself,—it is to strike at that power through which we live and move, and to lift our hand and direct our breath against him who continues our capacity for using both.

At a state and habit of mind like this, the man disposed to Friendship with God will be alarmed, will begin to look about him, and to inquire ‘What shall I do to be saved?’—how shall I keep clear, or get rid of that monstrous and destructive thing, enmity to God?—will seek after a rectified will, an enlightened mind, and holy and loyal affections;—will choose God as his supreme good; the book of God as his best guide; and the service of God as his best employment, with full purpose of heart cleaving unto the Lord, and expressing his full reconciliation to God, his providence, government, laws, and service in some such language as this—‘Thou art my portion O God!’ ‘I have said that I will keep thy words.’* ‘O how love I thy law; it is my continual meditation.’† ‘How sweet are thy words unto my taste; yea sweeter than honey to my mouth.’‡ ‘My soul breaketh for the longing which it hath for thy judgments at all times.’|| ‘I esteem all thy precepts concerning all things to be right, and I hate every false way.’§

* Psalm cxix. 57.

† Psalm cxix. 97.

‡ Psalm cxix. 103.

|| Psalm cxix. 20.

§ Psalm cxix. 126.

SECTION II.

Some other articles which constitute Friendship with God on our part, or by which we approve ourselves Friends of God. viz :—

KNOWLEDGE; CHOICE; DELIGHT.

I.—KNOWLEDGE. This is the foundation of all valuable human friendships. They that we make friends of, are such as we know, or think we know, to be excellent and amiable, and to be possessed of qualities that entitle them to our esteem, love, and confidence. And so it should be with us, and the great God—we should *know* him, in order to our being the faster and more faithful Friends of him. And it is our unspeakable happiness in the present case, that the more clear and thorough our knowledge of God is, the more we shall see of the desirableness of his Friendship, and the more we shall applaud ourselves for coveting it, ‘they that know thy name will put their trust in thee.’* The more entire our knowledge is of the best human characters, the more reason shall we see for charitable allowances and for a limited confidence; but the more we are acquainted with divine perfection and goodness, the more we shall be satisfied with the ground of our dependence and hope—and, like David, shall charge it upon ourselves with still greater complacency and solemnity—‘my soul wait thou only upon God.’† The knowledge of

* Psalm ix. 10.

† Psalm lxii. 5.

God will truly enrich us. How must that bosom be ennobled and adorned that is stored with suitable ideas of infinite power, goodness, wisdom, and faithfulness! This knowledge is the true treasure of the immortal mind, 'this is life eternal, says Jesus Christ himself, to know thee the only true God.* This is the knowledge that God allows the creature to glory and triumph in. 'Let him that glorieth, glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me.'†—the attributes of my nature and the methods of my government.

The knowledge of God is, or should be, natural to man—we are his offspring, and whom should we be so desirous of knowing as our great and heavenly parent? Shew us the great Father of all, should we say. Man, while unassisted by divine revelation, should call upon every creature to aid him in discovering the common eternal origin of himself and them.

Accordingly, ignorance of God is branded as in all cases shameful; 'I speak this to your shame'‡ says St. Paul, and in that it is generally chosen and affected as monstrous and unnatural:—'they liked not to retain God in their knowledge,'§ says the apostle of the heathen world, 'of this they are willingly ignorant,' § says Peter of some libertine scoffers in his time. Of this!—of what? why of God, as the Creator of the world, and the Creator of themselves. Some men will admit

* John xvii. 3.

+ Jeremiah ix. 23, 24.

‡ 1 Corinthians xv. 34.

§ Romans i. 28.

† 11 Peter iii. 5.

any absurdities, rather than admit God into their knowledge. This world shall be supposed to be made by chance, or to be eternal, and so not made at all, rather than God be owned for the architect; there shall be no providence, rather than he shall have the direction of it; and no future rewards and punishments, that he may be shut out from the distribution of them; and they will bear any burthens rather than seek after God as their deliverer, like those in the book of Job, whose affected ignorance, and wilful neglect of God is thus described—‘they cry out by reason of the arm of the mighty, yet none saith, where is God my maker?’* Though nature itself would dictate, ‘cry to him to give thee help who gave thee thy life;’ yet they had rather perish in their stupidity and misery, than so far acknowledge their maker’s being, power, and providence, as to implore his help. This chosen ignorance of God is the most debasing guilt of humanity, the most notorious violation of the law and duty of our creation.

Friendship with God supposes that we are willing to know God, that we take pains to know him—‘seeking after him, if haply we may find him,’† ‘following on to know the Lord,’‡ (as the prophet speaks), how excellent he is in himself, how related to us, and how suitable a portion for us,—and that to our endeavours we add our prayers to ‘the father of our Lord Jesus Christ,

* Job xxxv. 9, 10. † Acts xvii. 27. ‡ Hosea vi. 3.

the father of glory, that he would grant unto us the spirit of wisdom and understanding in the knowledge of himself.* The Friend of God has the knowledge of God. Knowledge is one of the characteristics of the new, or heaven-born creature. They that are renewed after the image of God, are renewed in knowledge as in the knowledge of truth in general, so especially of the God the author and the fountain of truth. The Friend of God uses heaven and earth, and every creature in both, as so many mediums for attaining to the sight of the blessed Creator--“To him there is a transparency in everything, through which the artificer shines. To him the works of God are so many windows for letting into his mind the most captivating beams of the divine perfections, while the sensual or the inconsiderate sinner uses them as so many curtains for shutting God and his perfections out.”†

The frame and furniture of the earth, the curious ornament of the heaven, termed ‘the work of his fingers’‡ the wide and swelling sea, all exhibit God to the admiring eye of his Friend; the awakening interpositions of providence in dreadful and deserved judgments are to him so many proclamations of the awful majesty and purity of God, and the general forbearance and benignity of that providence, do, in the small still voice of sweet and forcible persuasion, call him to

* Ephesians i. 17

† Mr. Mead

‡ Psalm viii. 3.

more established habits of gratitude, love and trust; the grazing beast, and chirping bird, bring to his remembrance that bountiful Lord, 'who gives to the beast his food, and to the young ravens that cry.'* The painted flower shews him the heavenly wisdom that decked it, and is endeared to him for its Maker's sake, as well as for its own. Thus to the friends of God, everything is full of God :

—"Thus God in every creature shines,
Fair is the book of Nature's lines,
But fairer is the book of Grace."

—which leads me to observe, that it is from the word of God that the friend of God derives the fullest and most delectable knowledge of him. From thence he forms such ideas of his almighty power, transcendent mercy, tender compassions, and long suffering patience, as create a very heaven in his breast, in point of tranquility, confidence, and delight, and give him fresh spirits for active and cheerful obedience.

After the knowledge of God, let us as we would approve ourselves the friends of God, be ambitious; let us covet it both for our credit and our comfort. 'Have I been so long time with thee (said Jesus Christ to a disciple), and yet hast thou not known me.' || So may Almighty God ask us, have I been so long with you, never far from you, by the displays of my power and holiness, by my wonderful works and my tender mercies, and yet you will not know or acknowledge me ?

* Psalm cxlvii. 9

|| John xiv 9.

If we are the sincere Friends of God, we shall dread this imputation and charge.

II.—Friendship with God, includes choice; the choice of him as our best hope, portion, and happiness. This is the very idea of friendship, viz :—the choosing some persons from amongst the rest as the objects of our special esteem, complacency, and trust. Friendship with God is our choice of him above every creature, and in the room of every creature, according to that rapturous exclamation, ‘Whom have I in heaven but thee, and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee.’*

The great and adorable God offers himself to our choice,—‘Choose you this day whom you will serve, love, and trust,’† me or vanity. He claims our choice,—‘my son give me thine heart.’‡ He expostulates with us as to whom we would choose to the refusal of him, or set in competition and and comparison with him,—‘to whom will ye liken God, and with what similitude will ye compare him?’§ And he laments every foolish and perverted choice that we make to the neglect of him, and the disappointment and misery that we thereby entail upon ourselves. ‘My people would have none of me,’§—‘my people have forsaken the fountain of living waters, and hewn out unto themselves broken cisterns that can hold no water.’¶ God is worthy to be chosen by us as our best friend and supreme good, for he is the

* Psalm lxxiii. 25. † Joshua xxiv. 15. ‡ Proverbs xxiii. 26.
 § Isaiah xl. 18. ¶ Psalm lxxxi. 11. ¶ Jeremiah ii. 13.

infinite ALL in ALL. 'I am the Almighty God,'* said he to his friend Abraham. As God here speaks of himself, so also like himself, with a divine greatness and majesty. His perfection contains all that we can imagine, and more than we can imagine—all knowledge, all goodness and all happiness, all that is desirable of whatever kind, and in the highest possible degree. All other objects of our choice are inadequate to our necessities, but 'how unlike them is the portion of Jacob?'†

And as God is the worthy, so he is the only suitable object of our choice; and therefore, if we choose him not, we do an injury both to him and ourselves; we rob him of his glory, and ourselves of our security and comfort. And how absurd is this method of conduct! How may a man lament his own condition, when it is duly apprehended by him, there is but one perfect being, but one satisfying good, but one suitable all-sufficient Friend of mankind, and I make no choice of him and therefore have no portion in him! From the worth and suitableness of the object, and also from the necessity of the case, the Friend of God makes that choice of him which I have been speaking of—'the Lord is the portion of mine inheritance, and of my cup.'‡ 'O my soul, thou hast said unto the Lord, thou art my Lord.' || 'I cried unto thee, O Lord, I said,

* Genesis xvii. 1.

† Jeremiah x. 16.

‡ Psalm xvi. 5.

|| Psalm xvi. 2.

thou art my refuge and my portion in the land of the living.’* And as the Friends of God make a choice of him as their present and final portion, so we find them expressly glorying in their choice and exhibiting the worthy object of it, to the admiration and love of mankind—‘Lo ! this is our God ; we have waited for him, and he will save us.’† ‘This God is our God for ever and ever.’‡ This God ! see how great and excellent he is, and how happy and safe we are in him. ‘Our God is in the heavens, he hath done whatsoever he pleased.’|| (spoken by way of triumph over the false gods of the heathens),—their idols are silver and gold, the work of men’s hands. Such a choice of God as our best friend and sovereign good, let us make. We may do it in a more solemn and express manner by prayers, vows, and sacraments ; or in a manner less express though more habitual, viz:—by our prevalent esteem of him, superlative love, unfeigned devotedness, and subjection. This choice is justified by the commands of scripture, which enjoin our cleaving to God, and not to vanity. It is justified by the representations which the scriptures make of God. ‘With thee is the fountain of life.’§ In thy presence is fulness of joy.** By the congratulations of scripture, ‘happy is he that hath the God of Jacob for his help, whose hope the Lord is.’†† And by the experience of the saints—‘O taste

* Psalm cxlii. 5. † Isaiah xxv. 9. ‡ Psalm xlviii. 14.

|| Psalm cxv. 3. 4

§ Psalm xxxvi. 9.

** Psalm xvi. 11.

†† Psalm cxlvi. 5.

and see that the Lord is good—blessed is the man that trusteth in him.* ‘Let us then take with us words, and turn unto the Lord,’—let us repent of every unworthy, and especially of every wicked choice we may have made against him, or in preference to him; adopting that most suitable language of the penitents of Isaiah,—‘O Lord, our Lord, other Lords besides thee have had dominion over us.’—Dominion over our understandings, our affections, and our pursuits.—‘but by thee only will we now make mention of thy name.’† What wait we for from other confidences? Our hearts are upon thee—our hope is in thee.‡

III.—Friendship with God supposes *delight* in him. And for this there is abundant room so far as power, perfection, and goodness can please. God is worthy of being delighted in, which every mortal is not. There may be shining qualities to excite admiration, and a good heart to command our esteem and confidence, and yet what is necessary to produce *delight* may be wanting. But God is an object every way delectable, and they that know his name shall be made ‘to drink of the river of his pleasure.’||

Delight in God is the temper and happiness of heaven,—there all is joy and complacency,—all is trust and triumph, and in this valuable article heaven may be brought down to earth.

* Psalm xxxiv. 8

† Isaiah xxi. 13.

‡ Psalm xxxix. 7.

|| Psalm xxxvi. 8.

We are allowed to delight in God, in his perfection as our entertainment, in his government as our confidence. We are commanded to delight in him. 'Delight thyself in the Almighty, and he shall give thee the desires of thy heart.'* It is so much God's will we should do this, that he will grant us all we can ask for it;—what a bribing of us to our own happiness!

Delight in God distinguishes the sincere soul from the hypocrite. Job asks concerning the latter—'will he delight himself in the Almighty.'† He may think of God with dread—mention him with apparent respect, serve him for an interest, and come to church for fashion, but as to delight in the nature, will, dominion, and providence of God, he is no such Friend as that comes to.

Delight in God is described as actually enjoyed by the Friends of God, 'thou hast put gladness in my heart more than in the time that their corn and wine increased.'‡ 'I will go to God, to God my exceeding great joy.'§ 'The peace of God which passeth all understanding, keeps their hearts and minds, § and subsists in the absence of other enjoyments.—'Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be on the vines, the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flocks shall be cut off from the fold and there shall be no herd in the stalls: yet will I rejoice in the Lord.—I will joy in the God of my salvation.'¶

* Psalm xxxvii. 4. † Job xxvii. 10. ‡ Psalm iv. 7.

§ Psalm xliii. 4. ¶ Philippians iv. 7. ¶ Habakuk iii. 17, 18.

In human friendships the delight is supposed to be mutual—But you will ask, can it be thus in the divine? That a poor creature surrounded with necessities, oppressed with fears, encompassed with dangers and obnoxious every hour to death, should be willing to delight in the eternal and all-sufficient God is in no way strange—But can He, the lofty, holy, happy Jehovah, can He delight in so mean, polluted and wretched a thing as man?

I must answer this query in the language of scripture, for no other authority will be taken. 'The upright are his delight.'* 'The Lord delighteth in thee, thy God shall rejoice over thee.'† 'His countenance doth behold the upright.'‡ Here is the idea of that special attention we give to any object that particularly pleases us—'the prayer of the upright is his delight.'§ 'He hath pleasure in the prosperity of his servants.'|| 'The Lord taketh pleasure in them that fear him, in those that hope in his mercy.'¶ Such language is sufficient to overwhelm us with gratitude and amazement, the condescension and goodness of it are unequalled and infinite.

* Proverb xi. 20.

† Isaiah lxii. 4, 5.

‡ Psalm xi. 7.

§ Proverb. xv. 18.

|| Psalm xxxv. 27.

¶ Psalm cxlvii. 11.

SECTION III.

Some further articles of this friendship, or, by which we approve ourselves Friends of God, viz :—

DEVOTIONAL INTERCOURSE, CHEERFUL SERVICE, PERSEVERING AND UNCHANGEABLE CONSTANCY

IV.—DEVOTIONAL INTERCOURSE. This naturally follows from that delight in God which was before spoken of—‘delighting in the Almighty, and calling upon God,’* are mentioned in connection ; the one being supposed to produce the other, we cannot long refrain the converse of them that we delight in, complacency in the heart will respire through the lips, and where God is the object, will teach the tongue the language of adoration, prayer, gratitude and trust.

God expects that agreeably to the laws of Friendship, we come near him, even to his seat and tell him what it is that we desire, hope or fear ; this is called in the Psalms, a pouring out of the heart before God—‘trust in him at all times ye people, pour out your hearts before him.’† Not that God wants any information from us as to our circumstances, prospects, or state of spirit, for he knows our work and our labour, and our patience ; knows every thing in and about us ; but that he accounts such communication suitable to the dependence we place upon him and the love we bear to him.

As God expects our devotional intercourse

* Job xxvii. 10.

† Psalm lxii. 8.

with him, so he commands it. ‘Call upon me in the day of trouble.’ |||| He encourages it—by the notice he takes of it and the manner in which he speaks of the several branches of it, what we say of him he dignifies with the name of praise, and accounts our impotent breath an addition to his transcendent glory—‘whoso offereth praise glorifieth me.’* Our prayer is so highly acceptable to him that he takes one of his titles from his readiness in hearing it—‘O thou that hearest prayer.’† Our tears whether of penitence or grief he is said ‘to put into his bottle’‡ and the sighs which escape us from oppressing affliction, or our inexpressible gratitude come up before him. § God encourages our devotional intercourse with himself by the provision he has made for it, he has erected a throne of mercy and placed before it his own Son in the character of mediator; who the better to compassionate our infirmities, was himself made a partaker of humanity, and went before us in the road of temptation and suffering and through the gates of death. We are directed to come with boldness to this throne, || because God who sits upon it, and Jesus who intercedes before it, are both our friends, and for the same reason we may come with boldness to the throne of glory and of judgment.

This devotional intercourse with God is a grand characteristic of a good man—‘the wicked call not upon God,’¶ ‘they restrain prayer before

|| Psalm l. 15. * Psalm l. 23. † Psalm lxxv. 2. ‡ Psalm lvi. 8.

§ Psalm xii. 5. || Hebrews iv. 16. ¶ Psalm xiv. 4. p 2

him '* from them no thanks that God is at hand to be praised or prayed to, to inspect them, or receive the expressions of their duty to him, his presence creates no joy to them.

Give me a corner, wrap me in a cloud, encompass me with darkness, says the sinner—all intercourse with the Deity must, by some means or other be intercepted—'Cause the holy one of Israel to cease from before us,' † said a lawless and rebellious people to their prophet,—remove the glorious object out of sight, his brightness and purity confound us. But it is the consolation and triumph of the righteous that God is ever near, that his omnipresence admits of devotional intercourse at all times, and that no circumstance or place can preclude a loyal and confidential address to heaven.

I shall only under this head exhibit the royal psalmist as an example of that converse with God which I am describing as a branch of Friendship with God. 'As for me I will call upon God, and the Lord shall save me; evening and morning and at noon will I pray and cry aloud and he shall hear my voice.' ‡ He resolved, that in this most noble and most pleasing employment, he would prevent the morning, and that he would wait for God to speak to him, and do homage at his throne more than they waited for its earliest beams. 'I say more than they that wait for the morning.' § Nay, midnight was to be witness to

* Job xv. 4.

† Isaiah xxx. 4.

‡ Psalm lv. 16. 17.

§ Psalm cxxx. 5, 6.

his adoring dispositions and expressions, 'my mouth shall praise thee with joyful lips when I remember thee upon my bed, and meditate on thee in the nightwatches.' * He coveteth the sanctuary for the sake of its divine inhabitants, and welcomed its services with the most pious and exalted affections. 'How amiable are thy tabernacles, O Lord of Hosts ! my soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of the Lord ; my heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God.' † 'One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after, that I may dwell in the house of the Lord, all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to enquire in his temple, ‡ when shall I come and appear before God.' §

V.—Friendship with God includes our cheerful service done to him, and for him. It enters into the notion of Friendship, that we serve and assist each other to the utmost of our power, properly speaking indeed our DIVINE FRIEND needs no service, and can receive no assistance from us ; it must be of his own that we give him. 'The earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof ; the world, and they that dwell therein.' || God that made the world, and all that is therein, seeing he is Lord of all, 'dwelleth not in temples made with hands, neither is worshipped with men's hands, as though he needed anything, ¶ the fountain of life is with him,' ||| the fountain from

* Psalm lxiii. 6, 7. + Psalm lxxxiv. 1, 2. † Psalm xxvii. 4.

‡ Psalm xlii. 2.

|| Psalm xxiv 1.

¶ Acts xvii. 24, 25.

||| Psalm xxxvi. 9.

whence we all participate. But God puts this dignity upon us, that he asks our service and challenges our assistance. 'Who is on the Lord's side?' * 'whom shall I send, viz:—with my messages and instructions, and who will go for us?' † As he dignifies what we say of him, and to him with the name of praise, so he dignifies what we do for him with the name of *service*, yea, he calls it not only service, which is what he may justly claim from all the creatures he has made, but he calls it *honour*, which is a word of different import and which expresses a thing we may either do, or forbear to do. 'Them that honour me I will honour.' ‡ There shall be honour for honour, only of a more excellent and valuable kind. 'If any man serve me, says Jesus Christ, him will my father honour.' § And shall we refuse our service to God our Divine Friend, when he puts it upon the footing of our doing him honour? It is not because he wants us, but because he would do us a favour, by employing us, and by receiving from us again as our gift to him, that which he first gave us, as a prince, or a noble honours a poor peasant, by first enabling him to offer gift and service, and then condescendingly accepting and kindly rewarding it. And what should be the return, I will not say of our generosity, but of our equity? should it not be something of this sort? Lord serve thyself of me, and by me, as thou shalt please, my body,

* Exodus xxxii. 26.

† Isaiah vi. 8.

‡ 1 Samuel ii. 30.

§ John xii. 26.

my soul, my time, my liberty, my life, all are thine—all were given by thee, and I would keep back nothing from thee. This is the language of Friendship, and it should be our language to our high and everlasting Friend—we receive from him upon all occasions, we constantly lean upon his power, derive from his bounty, serve ourselves of his creatures and are replenished out of his fulness—and shall we not serve his cause?—shall we enjoy breath and being from him and yield back nothing to him? ‘Is this thy kindness to thy Friend?’ *

VI.—True Friendship supposes persevering and unchangeable constancy and this must enter into our Friendship with God.

God is constant in his friendship for us; his promise is, ‘I will never leave thee nor forsake thee,’ † and his conduct is of a piece with his promise, ‘for thou Lord hast not forsaken them that seek thee.’ ‡ Let us be constant in our Friendship to him. We read concerning David and Jonathan, that they entered into a covenant of Friendship § with each other, and that they swore || to that covenant. Something of this kind should pass, something of this kind has frequently passed between God and us. Every vow, every act of self-dedication, every sacrament is a covenant or oath of Friendship with God. The very word sacrament, by which the Lord’s supper is denoted, signifies an oath, and has a

* 11 Samuel xvi. 17. † Hebrews xiii. 5. ‡ Psalm ix. 10.

‡ 1 Samuel xviii. 3.

§ Samuel xx. 3, 17.

reference to that oath of fidelity that every soldier took to his general. So far we have vowed unto the Lord, and cannot go back, and, therefore must perform our vows. 'I have sworn and I will perform it, that I will keep thy righteous judgments.' *

Constancy and perseverance in our Friendship with God is in every way adviseable. He is necessary to us, and we cannot do without him—that is one reason—'O keep thy God thy Friend' (said a great and good man),† 'for most certain it is thou wilt have occasion for him again, and thou knowest not how soon, keep thy interest in him, and estrange not thyself from him.' It is very unreasonable and foolish when a present turn is served to desert God, as though we should never want him again, as though we should never more be in necessity, fear, or trouble, we shall want him as our Friend in every step and stage of our journey through life, we shall especially want him at death, and the approach of eternity—things that will come, and must be provided for. Besides come what will, the keeping our interest in God as our Divine Friend will always be an advantageous and therefore a wise piece of conduct. Here we choose that good part that shall never be taken from us. Here we shall always be on the right side, for as God's cause must be triumphant, his friends must always come off with honour. Behold, (says the prophet) 'all they that forsake thee

* Psalm cxix. 106.

† The Lord Chief Justice Hale.

shall be ashamed ;' * but steadfast adherence to God is equally our duty and our glory. ' They shall not be ashamed in an evil time, and in the days of famine they shall be satisfied.' †

Of this steady, persevering, unchangeable constancy, the true servants of God, and more especially his suffering servants, have been examples. Hence sprang the noble deeds and wonderful achievements of that bright list of heroes which is given us by the writer to the Hebrews. ‡ The whole life, or daily converse, of those men upon earth, was one continued struggle with such evils as are most terrible to the apprehensions of mankind,—but they waxed valiant in the fight by keeping near to their divine leader—the storm that was raised to drive them to a distance from him, drove them so much the closer to him, and they behaved themselves in all respects as became the heirs of that most excellent portion that they looked for,—shewing us, and all the world, how to live as seeing him who is invisible, and choose present afflictions rather than sinful pleasures, from a respect to God as the rewarder of them that seek him.

But when I am enumerating the things which constitute us the Friends of God, it would be a manifest omission not to exhibit the distinguishing and characteristic virtues of Abraham, to whom this title, ' Friend of God ' was originally given—this I will do in the following section.

* Jeremiah xvii. 13. † Psalm xxxvii. 19. ‡ Jeremiah xi.

SECTION IV.

The characteristic virtues of Abraham—the Friend of God viz:—

FAITH, RESIGNATION, ZEAL.

I.—FAITH. Faith in God, as the Almighty, wise and holy ruler of the universe—This was the leading virtue in Abraham's character, on which account he is styled the 'father of them that believe,'* and 'faithful Abraham.'† His faith, for the sake of its excellent influence, was 'imputed to him for righteousness,‡ and obtained for him the glorious name under which we are now considering him.

The grand act of his faith the writer to the Hebrews specifies in these words,—'By faith, Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed and he went out, not knowing whither he went,—by faith he sojourned in the land of promise as in a strange country, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob the heirs with him of the same promise. For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God.'§ The original call of Abraham, to which these words refer you have in the book of Genesis.||

* Romans iv. 2. † Galatians iii. 9. ‡ Galatians iii. 6.
 § Hebrews xi. 8, 9, 10. ¶ Hebrews xii. 1, 4.

How extraordinary a call was this ! what fortitude and faith were necessary to obedience ! to leave country and kindred and go to a distant land—to believe himself a father of nations, and to anticipate to himself a posterity numerous as the stars of heaven or the dust of the earth, while as yet he was childless, and likely ever to remain so, to appropriate Canaan to this his promised seed, while he himself was but a pilgrim and a stranger there without a foot of ground that he could call his own, and to look forward to their safe and advantageous settlement there, after many wonderful previous changes, and a bondage of four hundred years—what dependence upon God ! what persuasion of his faithfulness and power must not all this argue !

However, Abraham believed God and obeyed. He believed that omnipotence could protect him in his sojournings, yea, that with an omnipresent deity on his side he should always be at home, in point of security and enjoyment, agreeably to the pleasing sentiment of Moses—‘ Lord thou hast been our dwelling place in all generations.’ * In all our wanderings we had a home in thy favour. And as to that part of the promise that respected the numerousness of his posterity, we are told that against hope he believed in hope, having that God to trust ‘ who quickeneth the dead.’ † In the faith of God’s promise to him, solemnly made, and frequently repeated, he both lived and

* Psalm xc. 1.

† Romans iv. 17, 18.

died,—as an instance of his faith, purchasing a field of the people amongst whom he sojourned for a burying place for himself and his beloved Sarah, firmly persuaded that God would one day visit his descendants and bring them thither to mingle their dust with his own, as afterwards came to pass. You see this faith of Abraham was an influential and powerful principle engaging him to forsake house and country, and to go wherever our God should lead him.

Now it is but a part of Friendship with God, for us to have the like faith in him, and under its influence and direction to submit cheerfully to all the changes of this unsettled world. All the changes of habitation, place, employment, and friends too, should be willingly acquiesced in, so long as we have reason to believe that we are under the guidance and command of our Almighty friend above. We must not look at any circumstances of hardness or grievousness that his calls may in their first aspect wear, but must look at the power, truth, and goodness of him that calls us. He can command us no where, but he can take care of us; for the world is all his own, and every creature can be made a minister of his providence, in a wilderness he can satisfy us as with marrow and fatness. We know not indeed particularly in what methods he will do it; yet in whatever way it shall be done, there is pleasure in the thought and to God there is infinite ease in the work.

II.—Resignation was another eminent virtue in Abraham's character. The wonderful instance of it, which is recorded to his immortal honour, is the readiness he manifested to offer his son in sacrifice at God's command, that son, the gift of whom was the beginning of the fulfilment of God's comprehensive promise to him, and upon whose life the complete fulfilment absolutely depended. By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac, and he that had received the promises, offered up his only begotten son, of whom it was said, that 'in Isaac shall thy seed be called.' * What an act of Friendship to God, and trust in him was this! the fact speaks for itself, and needs no comment. In proportion to the degree of our Friendship with men, we resign ourselves to them, and put our all into their hands; in our carriage towards our great and heavenly *Friend*, our resignation should be entire, because his goodness and wisdom are infinite. He first gave us all we possess and still knows how to make the best use of all, both for us and for himself. He takes as well as gives with the kindest intention, and therefore is in each case equally entitled to our blessing him. It was spoken like a friend, 'though he slay me, yet will I trust in him,' † I will put my life in his hands, nor abate my confidence in him, if he take even that away. Consider the circumstances of him who made this noble declaration. His substance was destroyed, his children were slain,

* Hebrews xi. 17, 18.

† Job xiii. 15.

his body tormented with the ingenious cruelty of a devil, and nothing was left him but a few false and mistaken friends, some of whom tempted him to renounce his religion and others would have persuaded him that he had no religion to renounce, at one time urging him to revile his God, and at another to revile himself and yet in the midst of all these trials, 'Job sinned not, nor charged God foolishly,'* Acknowledging God's right to all, Friendship must not be offended if he take some. There is a speech of the pious Archbishop of Cambray that seems worthy of a place in the inspired volume. 'If there needed no more than to move a straw to bring him † back to life again, I would not do it, since the pleasure of God is otherwise.' When David and Jonathan had made a covenant of Friendship with each other, the next thing we read is 'that Jonathan stripped himself of the robe that was upon him, and gave it to David, and his garments even to his sword, and to his bow, and to his girdle.' ‡ He gave him all he had, whether for covering, ornament or defence. Something of this kind should be our behaviour towards our divine Friend. We should be willing to strip ourselves of all mortal advantages and delights for his sake, holding nothing too dear to part with at his bidding, nothing our own when he calls for it from us; and in this imitation of the resignation and Friend-

* Job i. 22.

† Meaning his royal pupil the Duke of Burgundy (Cambray's Life).

‡ Samuel xxiii. 4.

ship of the Redeemer of mankind who stripped himself to clothe us, emptied himself to fill us, put on our poor ragged nature that we might be adorned with the divine excellencies of his.

Brethren, ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ who 'when he was rich, for our sakes became poor that we by his poverty might be made rich.' * Resignation is the true temper of Christianity, it is that embracing the cross of Christ without which we cannot be worthy of him: and it is moreover the certain mark of a great and heroic mind. To be excessively clinging to our mortal comforts, as if a separation were our inevitable and immediate destruction, argues a little mind that has never been enlarged by the hope of eternal objects, but when we can quit the beaten road of present self-seeking, and self-gratification which most men walk in, and in a steady and placid manner subject the disposal of all our blessings to the God who bestowed them all—this is a great spirit; it is that overcoming both the world and ourselves, which is the highest victory we can attain in our militant state here upon earth, and which shall be followed with the hundredfold restitution of all that we now lose in heaven.

III.—ZEAL was another distinguished virtue in Abraham's character; zeal for God and his honour amongst men. This kind of zeal is inseparable from true Friendship. What! is it my

* II Corinthians viii. 9.

friend's cause? I'll serve the cause of my friend to the utmost of my power; and this should be our resolution with respect to God, our Almighty Friend on high. God himself bears testimony to Abraham on this head. He gave this as one of his reasons for communicating to him the terrible judgments he was about to execute upon the ancient sinners. Shall I hide from Abraham the thing I am about to do? and why not from Abraham as well as others! It was because of the good use he would make of the intelligence, and the manner in which he would apply it for the spreading a reverence for God and his government all around him. I know him, and he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord 'to do justice and judgment.'* I know Abraham, I can trust him for this. This is a great character, and it should be ours. It will be ours, if our Friendship to God be sincere; Almighty God has a cause and interest in this apostate world, and he calls upon us to defend and serve it. Our pen, our purse, our learning, our authority, all the several advantages of ourselves and callings must be directed to this end. To enlighten the ignorant, to reclaim the wicked,—to convince gainsayers, to direct, encourage, and strengthen in the road to eternal life, to turn men from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, this, this is serving the cause and interest of God in the

* Genesis xviii. 19.

world; the doing this he calls and accounts our honouring him: our neglecting to do it he resents and will punish. And how justly, how justly may he upbraid and condemn our supineness and indifference on this article! A liberal and ingenious person would be very deeply wounded by such a recrimination as this:—you have not used me well; you have not treated me like a friend. Let us all take care that the great God have not this charge to bring against us. A Friend! and see my name dishonoured, my bounty abused and my authority trampled in the dirt!—this is what God in effect hath said; and with severe upbraidings, very awakening chastisements have followed the indifference of some upon this head, who were nevertheless in their own dispositions and intentions sincere and upright before him. You are acquainted with the calamities that alighted upon Eli's family: and this is given as the cause, the iniquity which he knew, but did not correct; 'because his sons made themselves vile, and he restrained them not.' * The true Friend of God says, 'Do not I hate them, O Lord, that hate thee? and am not I grieved with those that rise up against thee?' † 'Depart from me ye evil doers for I will keep the commandments of my God.' ‡ I am a companion of them that fear thee, and of them that keep thy precepts. 'Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as in heaven.' §

* 1 Samuel iii. 13.

† Psalm cxxxix. 21.

‡ Psalm cxix. 63.

§ Matthew vi. 10.

CHAPTER V.

SOME MOST EXCELLENT PERFECTIONS OF GOD,
WHICH RENDER A STATE OF FRIENDSHIP WITH
HIM INFINITELY DESIRABLE, VIZ :—

POWER, OMNIPRESENCE, FAITHFULNESS,
ETERNITY.

I.—POWER. This is a venerable attribute of Deity and when conceived of as engaged on our side, pleasing and lovely. ‘I know that thou canst do everything,’* said Job; struck with awe at those wonderful effects of the power of God, which in the lofty strain of deity had been recounted to him and by the mention of which all created power was confounded and silenced. ‘If I speak of strength, lo, he is strong;’ † when ascribed to him the word has a meaning. ‘Power belongeth unto God.’ ‡ Creature claims must be excluded; all being weakness when sent in comparison with his might. Besides extraordinary exertions of the power of God, which have in all ages commanded the attention and fear of the children of men, the still and uniform display of it, in upholding the frame of the earth

* Job xlii. 2.

† Job ix. 19.

‡ Psalm lxi. 2.

and the orbs of the heaven, challenges our admiration and we may daily stop and adore it. And in this power of God, the Friend of God has an interest. God is described as in a manner possessing it for his sake, and he is encouraged to make his humble claims upon it. The eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the earth, to shew himself strong in behalf of them 'whose heart is perfect towards him.'* Armed, if I may so speak, with the omnipotence of the God they served, with what superior grandeur did three youths reply to the threats of an angry monarch 'We are not careful to answer thee in this matter: our God, whom we serve, is able to deliver us, and he will deliver us out of thine hand, O King.'† Nebuchadnezzar's enraged and distorted visage, the most mighty men of his army that he called about him to revenge this insult, his claim of uncontrollable dominion, and his fiery furnace for all that disputed it, convey but a poor idea of greatness in comparison with this composed but elevated speech. And as in this memorable instance, so on more common occasions, he giveth power to the faint and 'to them that have no might he increaseth strength,'‡ he fortifies the spirits of his servants within and carries them through and above all temptations and afflictions without, his power extends to all worlds, he can change and controul the course of this for the benefit of his friends (and he has done it in very astonishing

* 11 Chronicles xvi. 9.

+ Daniel iii. 16, 17.

‡ Isaiah xl. 29.

particulars) and can conduct them safely and advantageously to a better—with him is everlastingly strength. And this is what we want, because we are made for an everlasting existence. Give me the friend that can conduct me through all the changes of life, death and the resurrection.

II.—God is Omnipresent, and this makes him a most desirable Friend.

Amongst men distance makes many a chasm in those friendships which death will shortly dissolve. But our Divine Friend is ever near. We cannot see those disconsolate borders that are not filled with his presence and bounty, or from which the expressions of our duty and joy cannot reach him. A virtuous heathen once consoled himself with this persuasion, that whithersoever he should be banished he should still be able to admire the works of God, and to maintain converse with God. * This makes every place alike good to the Friend of God; and in every place he is alike happy. His prayer can nowhere be lost in the wind, nor his professions of respect scattered with the dust.

‘God is near to all them that call upon him,’ † near to supply, near to justify them. ‡ And as is his presence, so his knowledge is universal and infinite: he can judge of our appeals from men—of our appeals to himself—so that we may at all times, and in all places, have the divine satisfaction of conscious innocence and an approving God,

* Vide Title Page.

† Psalm cxlv. 18.

‡ Isaiah l. 8

‘thou that knowest all things, knowest that I love thee.’ *

Let us a little further indulge to the pleasure of this thought, viz. that God is a Friend ever present with us: there are several kinds and instances of solitude to which it may be most charmingly applied. Sometimes we choose to be alone for rest of the body or refreshment of the spirits,—in this instance how pleasing is it that we have our heavenly Friend with us so as to be able to say, ‘I will both lay me down in peace and sleep, for thou Lord only makest me dwell in safety.’ † ‘When I awake, I am still with thee.’ ‡ Solitude may be chosen for improvement in knowledge and devotion—now as this solitude especially invites the presence of God, so it is made highly delightful and improving by it. Our Father seeth in secret, and a good person at such a season has both meat to eat and company to keep, that the world knoweth not of.

And as solitude may in some cases be chosen by us, so it may in others be forced upon us.

There is a solitude occasioned by distance from home, by loss of friends. ‘Lover and friend hast thou put far from me, and mine acquaintance into darkness.’ § There is the solitude of a sick chamber and above all, the solitude of death. Then we must be alone. I don’t mean without company near us, or attendance upon us, but without any one dying with us and accompanying

* John xxi. 17.

† Psalm iv. 8.

‡ Psalm cxxxix. 18.

§ Psalm lxxxviii. 18.

us in the unknown path to the worldly spirits. No, no dying is a transaction that will wholly lie between God and ourselves. To have him then present as a friend, to have him come to us at death, as to Paul in the storm, saying, 'fear not for I am with thee,'—this is sufficient to make a good man leap into his grave for joy. Dost thou, blessed Lord, thus command me, fear not?—then 'though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil for thou art with me.' *

III.—The Faithfulness of God is another attribute that makes him a most desirable Friend to us.

A man who was himself very insincere and prevaricating, could bear this testimony to God: 'He is not a man that he should lie, hath he said and shall not he do it?' † In this attestation of the faithfulness of God, there is an oblique glance at the unfaithfulness of men. They impose upon our credulity, fail us in our dependencies, and disappoint us in our expectations: it is an old complaint, 'that the faithful fail from amongst the children of men,' ‡ but who, O Lord God of hosts, is a strong Lord, like unto thee? 'and to thy faithfulness round about?' § What sad work is often made in human friendships by causeless jealousies, evil reports, slender surmises, and the imagination of neglects and offences which were never real; but our Divine Friend both knows our sincerity and pardons our infirmities; and therefore with

* Psalm xxiii. 4.

† Numbers xxiii. 19.

‡ Psalm xii. 1.

§ Psalm lxxxix. 8.

him we can never suffer from such causes, above all what bonds of faith and friendship have been broken by wants and cares, and calamities on one side and wealth and honour and elevation on the other ! How few will know a man in trouble, or be willing to renew or acknowledge former connections with him ! 'I looked on the right hand and beheld, but there was no man that would know me; refuge failed me, no man cared for my soul.'* 'All my inward friends abhorred me,'† (said Job), his crime was, that he was become afflicted and poor. This made a disciple deny his master;—'I know not the man.'‡ He knew him when he was upon the mount shining in all the glories of his transfiguration—he knew him when he fed the multitude by miracle and was forward to declare his knowledge—'thou art Christ the son of the living God.'§ But when he stood a poor insulted prisoner at the bar of the High Priest, then he knew him not. This was Paul's case too, 'no man stood by me, but all men forsook me.'|| So little will the best cause secure the world's attachment to one in distress. But God's ways are not as ours. He is with us while we are with him. Trouble is described as inviting his help and presence; and he is invoked by the nearness and extremity of it. 'Be not far from me, for trouble is near, and there is none to help.' |||| Vain as this plea would be with men,

* Psalm cxlii. 4.

† Job xix. 19.

‡ Matthew xxvi. 72.

§ Matthew xvi. 16.

|| 1 Timothy iv. 16.

|||| Psalm xxii. 2.

it has its power and prevalence with God. He met Jacob and David in a wilderness, and followed Joseph into a prison. He came to Paul when in the castle of the chief captain, and to add dignity to deliverance upon another occasion, shook the foundations of the place he was confined in, by an earthquake. * The rest of the apostles were 'persecuted, but not forsaken.' † John, in his banishment to a desolate island, was entertained with the revelation of celestial glories, and Jesus in his unparalleled sufferings was never alone, 'the Father being with him.' ‡ Thus faithful is God in his friendship and favour. O let us be thankful to him in return—let us not break with him, who will never break with us—and whose promise is, 'be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.' § Let us with the spirit and language of holy resolution, demand with St. Paul, 'who shall separate us from the love of Christ?' || Let us with faith and fortitude like him, give the challenge to all human evils, and we shall as he was, be 'more than conquerors through him that hath loved us.' |||

IV.—God is an everlasting Friend, and this makes his friendship to the utmost degree desirable.

◆ Hear and bow at his majestic name; The
'KING ETERNAL, IMMORTAL, INVISIBLE!' ¶

* Acts xvi. † II Corinthians iv. 9. ‡ John xvi. 32.

§ Revelations ii. 10. ¶ Romans viii. 35.

|| I Timothy i. 17. ¶ Romans viii. 37.

Unchangeable life is a most glorious attribute. This shews unquestionable Divinity; 'living and true' are therefore joined together in the scripture accounts of the most high Jehovah. 'The Lord is the true God, he is the living God, and an everlasting King.' * 'The living and true God, † the true, because the living.' This just and exalted sentiment we have in another place. ‡ The blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings and Lord of lords, who only hath immortality. It is this that makes him the only potentate, as well as the *blessed*, viz. his exclusive claim to immortality. Without immortality all is mock majesty; we give the titles of high and mighty and powerful to the princes of the earth, and with parade and solemnity proclaim them over their dust; but can there be a severer satire? But to God belongs original, underived, incorruptible life, 'he has life in himself,' § and is the spring of it to others and therefore very suitably addressed by a good man in this form, 'God of my life.' || The immortality of God makes him the worthy object of worship. Paul demanded worship to him from the heathen by this consideration; 'we preach unto you that ye should turn from these vanities unto the living God.' ¶ This attribute makes him worthy of our trust also—of our trust in the extremest dangers, and our obedience in the greatest sufferings—'therefore we both labour and suffer reproach, because we trust in the living

* Jeremiah x. 10.

† Thessalonians i. 9.

‡ Timothy vi. 15. 16.

§ John v. 26.

|| Psalm xlii. 8.

¶ Acts xiv. 15.

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God.' * How does death sink the value of human friendships! a man smiles upon me, and promises me fair; and the next news I hear of him is that he is dead: his breath goeth forth, he returneth to his earth, in that day his thoughts perish. † Hence the complaint of many a deserted creature. I had a friend once that would have stood by me in my present difficulties: I could ask his counsel, I could command his substance—but he is gone. God will leave us with no such complaints, fitly therefore is the living God contrasted with uncertain riches and the fading enjoyments of this world. ‡ 'the Lord liveth, and blessed be my rock and let the God of my salvation be exalted.' § The immortality of God is a sufficient security for the accomplishment of all his promises and hopes; while God is Eternal as well as faithful, no promise can be lost, death may intervene, and we pass away, but his promise shall stand from this eternity of God in conjunction with his truth, we believe there shall be a resurrection of the patriarch's dust, and the martyr's ashes; and the fulfilment of all their expectations who died in faith, Abel's righteousness, Enoch's godliness, Noah's pious fear, and Abraham's steadfast faith are all sure of recompense and we shall be made perfect with them. The long interval between death and resurrection shall pass under his eye and at the set time he has appointed, he shall remember us; and wise and holy men of all nations

* 1 Timothy iv. 10.

† Psalm cxlvi. 4.

‡ Timothy vi. 17.

§ 11 Samuel xxii. 47.

and ages from the beginning of the creation to the end of it, shall be instated in the possession of eternal life together, by that God, 'to whom one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day,' * his eternity swallowing up time and all the period by which we divide it.

It is the remark of a great and noble writer, † 'That in a friend a man perpetuates himself, in that such a one will guard his children, his family and his affairs after him.' With how much more reason may this be said of our Immortal Friend ; whose mercy is from generation to generation upon them that fear him ; whose providence will brighten the character and endear the memory of the just man, and who can prosper and bless every valuable interest that we leave behind us in this world, as well as keep the immortal spirit we resign to him till the day of recompense.

* 11 Peter iii. 8.

† Lord Bacon.

CHAPTER VI.

ADVANTAGES RESULTING FROM THIS REPRESENTATION OF A RELIGIOUS CHARACTER, VIZ.—THAT IT IS MAINTAINING FRIENDSHIP WITH GOD. RELIGION IS EXHIBITED IN THE MOST PLEASING ASPECT—AN INCOMPARABLE LUSTRE AND BEAUTY ARE CAST UPON PROVIDENCE. AFFLICTION IS MADE LIGHT AND EASY—THE NOTION OF DEATH IS IMPROVED, AND THE PROSPECT OF IT MADE FAMILIAR AND AMIABLE.

I.—RELIGION is exhibited in the most pleasing form it can possibly wear. A lovelier idea of religion could not have been devised: one would imagine it was so represented on purpose to engage and charm the world, and make all mankind its votaries.

How good is God to put the whole of our devotional demeanour to him upon this footing! and instead of commanding us to submit to him as slaves, or obey him as subjects, to say, live in daily intercourse with me as Friends! your love and trust, your devotedness and subjection, your prayer and praise shall be called Friendship and not duty. How good is God on his part! and how delightful and eligible should all religious

sentiments, habits and acts be on ours ! Ye who fancy a harshness and bondage to belong to religious exercises, attend to this view of them. There are so many ways by which a good man expresses his friendship for the best of beings, and draws down his Friendship upon himself in return. Consider religion in this light and it is well worth while to leave the most important business—the most entertaining company, to mind it. A good man leaves company and friends, not to perform a hard task or to go into a disconsolate solitude ; What does he go for ? (says the gay sensualist, or the sordid worldling) for !—Why to enjoy the best of all friends and to engage for awhile in the best of all business. To delight himself in the contemplation of infinite perfection—to put himself under the guidance of Almighty Providence—to divest his anxious heart of every care by casting all his cares upon God—to relieve himself under every oppressing evil by the exercises of resignation and patience—to make all prospects bright by the elevations of faith and hope—and to establish his own comfort by looking to God as his portion, and to heaven as his home. This is the true light in which to conceive of secret religion and of the Friend of God as employed in it—and is this gloomy ? No wonder that such a man relishes retirement and welcomes the seasons of it, to him it is no act of self-denial, no kind of unwilling constraint, no interruption of beloved pleasures, to retire and converse with

his maker; such a man (according to the saying of the philosopher), 'Is never less alone than when most alone;' a stranger intermeddle not with his joys and in his communion with the Father of spirits, he enjoys more in an hour than the sons of dissipation, and professed pleasure enjoy in a whole life time.

And then as to public duties—Consider them in the light of Friendship with Deity, and as the means both of expressing and improving that friendship, and what an appearance have they! instead of saying with the hypocritical Jews 'when will the new moon begone and the sabbath ended, what a weariness is it.' We shall say with another person, 'a day in thy courts is better than a thousand.' And as the pleasure of religion is manifest from this representation of it, viz:—Friendship with God, so also its grandeur, the doing justly and loving mercy, is called walking with God, than which no higher honour can be put upon man.

II.—This representation of religion, viz. that it is Friendship with God, reflects an incomparable lustre and beauty upon Providence.

How delightful a thought is it (and it is a thought that may at any time, at all times, spring up in a good man's mind), all that pertains to me, to my present, or my final state,—all is in the hands of a friend of a powerful, a faithful, an ever present Friend; I can be no where but he will be with me,—can see no changes but what

he must appoint,—can sustain no evils but what he can over-rule to my benefit; if I suffer, my sufferings will not be penal; they will be but part of his friendly discipline; the fruit of love, and not of wrath.

When our blessed Saviour attempted to fortify the minds of his timorous disciples, he did it by this consideration, viz. that he was their fast and assured friend. ‘I say unto you, my friends be not afraid of them that kill the body, * let my friendship preclude your fear, I will take care of my friends, so that either your enemies shall not kill you, or if they kill you they shall not hurt you. Now forasmuch as God calls us Friends, let his declared Friendship have a like effect upon us, pacifying our spirits, dissipating our fears, and enabling us to look forward into futurity with all the confidence of faith and hope.

Is God my friend, may a good man say, then he will order all for the best, both while I live, and when I die, and after my death he can take care of all that I care for in this world, so that every interest is secure and every fear groundless. This makes the divine government appear lovely and our concern with the world sit easy upon our spirits.

III.—Is a religious man, as such, a friend of God, how prepared should he be for afflictions, in virtue of such a relation!

He may in all conditions adopt St. Paul’s

* II Luke xii. 4.

concise and descriptive account of himself and his brethren, 'troubled on every side yet not distressed, perplexed, but not in despair, cast down but not destroyed: as sorrowful yet always rejoicing: as having nothing and yet possessing all things.' * A Friend of God can never be in a state that is to be pronounced desperate. Life itself is not essential to his comfort; he may be happy though he dies, and he must die before he can be happy completely. In all afflictive changes the Friend of God has him near who is denominated the God of hope, the God who comforteth them that are cast down; the goods of such a man may be spoiled, but his soul abides in peace: in the exercises of divine Friendship such as resignation, faith, and hope, he has one heaven in possession, as well as another in reserve, in the cruel disappointments, and bitter complaints of the children of this world, whose portion is in this life, he has no part or share, his treasure is in heaven, † and can therefore no more be affected by the convulsions of the earth, than the sun can be injured by a storm, or the firmament be removed by an earthquake. And as agreeably to our Saviour's remark, where the treasure is, the heart will be also—I add, that the Friend of God has, in his heavenly dispositions and affections, a fund of sublime and permanent entertainment, he has that spiritual mind which is life and peace, and which effectually preserves both the tranquillity and grandeur of the soul of man.

* II Corinthians iv, vi. 8, 9, 10.

† Matthew vi. 20.

Accordingly secure and happy in the friendship of heaven, St. Paul bids defiance to the miseries of the earth in a strain of rhetoric, which nothing but the divine spirit could ever have dictated, one who possessed as much natural greatness of soul as an apostle,* and that carried to the highest pitch by the noble considerations and the most excellent influence of christianity, glosses upon the incomparable passage I refer to, † some what in this manner. Having magnanimously challenges every possible trouble to separate him from the love of Christ and by so doing complete his wretchedness, such as tribulation, distress, persecution, famine, nakedness, peril, and the sword,—and finding none of these to answer to the challenge,—but that singly, and in this combination into which he had thrown them all were silent, he goes on in the elevations of his faith to suppose even impossible trials, such as the attempts of angels, principalities and powers against him, he may indeed be supposed to speak of evil angels and powers, but should he be conceived as speaking of good ones, the very angels of heaven, were they to attempt it, could not separate us from the divine Friendship or make us wretched while we enjoyed it; there would be nothing in this but what might be accounted for by the uncommon sublimity of Paul's spirit in the present case, affecting to en-

* The pious and truly venerable Archbishop Leighton.

† Romans viii. 35, &c.

counter difficulties that will never happen. Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors: I am persuaded that these can do nothing against us.

IV.—If a religious life be Friendship with God, then to a good man the notion of death is greatly improved, and the prospect of it is made familiar and pleasant.

Is God our Friend! then dying is going to a friend, to a powerful and faithful friend, with whom we shall find everything that can make up our happiness, and with whom we may securely leave all our affairs. It is going to a Friend that will meet us on the road, conduct us to his house and make us everlastingly welcome and happy there.

The parting with friends is the very sting of death itself. But how is this sting extracted, when it is recollected that though death dissolves all other friendships, it confirms and establishes this which is the best of all, so far from dissolving this best of all connections it makes it the stricter, the more perfect and entire, as well as perpetual. How pleasing a reflection is it to cross a good man's mind when heart and flesh are failing; I am going to my divine friend, without anything unfriendly in me towards him, and without cause for fearing anything unfriendly from him. Death is his messenger, his friendly messenger,—I know who calls me away by him; it is no enemy,—it is no stranger: we have lived in friendly intercourse while at a distance, and now he calls me

nearer, that the correspondence may be continued with infinite advantage to all eternity.

A person who dies thus, needs never to object either to the time or manner of dying; he can never be so attached to other friends, can never be so busy, either with them or for them, but it must be worth while to throw up all, and go at God's summons. To depart and be with God must to the Friend of God, be far better than to remain here in any imaginable circumstances of happiness or usefulness. Nothing can be lost to him, by finding himself in God's arms, no pleasure lost, by entering into his master's joy, his father's house, his friend's embrace.

Now what a view of death is this! The friends of God's friend need not say as Thomas did with respect to Lazarus. Let us also go that we may die with them, he has the best of all friends, not dying with him, but living for him, living to receive him and eternally to bless him.

This is the true friendship in death. This is dying safely. Then out of friendship with God may be said, not so properly to die as to be slain with death, of them death makes an utter end; so far as relates to hope and happiness, the friend of God survives the blow and triumphs beyond it.

This is dying comfortably. This friendship softens the dying pillow, delights in the agonies of death, and gilds the hovering shadows of the grave. With the Divine friendship death will be

* Deuteronomy xxxii. 49, 50.

no more to us than it was to Moses. God said 'go up into that mountain and die,'* and his servant did it. No more than Jacob's descent into Egypt, 'fear not Jacob, to go down into Egypt, for I will go with thee, and will surely bring thee up again.'* With God as our friend we may as cheerfully go down to our house of bondage, and with an equal certainty of being brought up again. In his own time he will remember us, and will send us deliverance from death. When that solemn and interesting period which he has appointed shall be come, and all persons and things in the upper and lower worlds shall be ready, he will give commandment concerning our bones; the dead shall arise, his own friends first, and the world, like a theatre that has answered the purpose for which it was erected, and which was no other than the transacting the wonderful work of human redemption, shall be broken to pieces and consumed. A certain emperor,† having on a great occasion opened his prisons and released his captives, is said to have expressed himself in the following humane, though inefficacious wish, 'and now would to God I could open the tombs and give life to the dead.' This our divine and heavenly friend, both can do it and will do, 'Our friend Lazarus sleepeth (said Jesus Christ), but I go to awake him out of his sleep.'‡ So will God awake his Friends from death—raise them by his power and adorn them with his glory. And what accounts should we make of death when

* Genesis xlv. 3, 4.

† Theodosius.

‡ John xi. 2.

it is to be followed by such a resurrection? Come when, and how it will, death will be our friend while God is such. The first attacks may startle and alarm us, but as the power of death is broken our safety and comfort are ensured. At the beginning of the storm the disciples were affrighted, but as soon as they knew that it was Jesus they took courage. Something of this kind will happen to us at death; the first onset will dismay and terrify,—for which reason death is called the failure of our heart as well as of our flesh, but as soon as our relation to God as Friends is recollected, the tumult will subside, we shall venture unto the world of eternity at his call, as Peter walked upon the sea at the call of Christ—shall find all firm and stable under us and shall get to the haven where we would be. Compared with this, how mean is the ambition of dying rich! Or in any of those circumstances of distinction and advantage over others, which are so highly valued and so vehemently coveted by the children of men! A man may have all the comforts of this life, and yet die comfortless; in death as well as at the resurrection.—‘The upright shall have the dominion.’ Let them die upon a solitary mountain or in an unfrequented wood, nothing is lost in point either of safety or benefit—the way to God will lie open to a ready and well prepared spirit from whatsoever place, and short will its journey be to that world where all are Friends of God, where the sacred flame is reflected from breast to breast and all disaffection banished for ever.

CHAPTER VII.

SOME GENERAL REFLECTIONS ON THE SUBJECT OF FRIENDSHIP WITH GOD. WE SEE WHERE TO PLACE THE REAL DIGNITY OF HUMAN NATURE,—WE LEARN THAT LIVING IN THE BODY IS ENTIRELY CONSISTENT WITH A VERY NOBLE AND EXALTED KIND OF LIFE, AND WE SHOULD ASPIRE AFTER THAT LIFE,—IT BEING NO MORE THAN THE EXCELLENCE AND HAPPINESS OF OUR FIRST ESTATE.

I.—WE see where to place the real dignity of human nature. A capacity for this Friendship, and most of all, the cultivation of it raises us above the brutes, and puts us upon a level with angels. Do angels converse with God?—so may we,—are they blessed in his Friendship and favour? we may be the same. Upon this let us value ourselves, and the more we do value ourselves upon this honour, the less shall we be in danger of over-valuing ourselves upon other and inferior considerations. Men usually rate themselves high enough, but they do it for things that are very remote from true greatness, and which can never constitute it.

Some value themselves upon form and figure and other graceful ornaments of the body,—these

to be sure attract the eyes and engage the inclinations of men : the world admires them, and gallantry adores them, but they that have the greatest share of them are daily subject to altering diseases, and to ghastly death,—such as are worshipped for these advantages to day may not be known by them to-morrow.—‘They shall not say this was Jezabel, or this was the daughter of a King.’

Others value themselves upon their wealth,—we have so much prosperity in this world which we inhabit,—let such know that the world acknowledges no proprietor but the Lord that made it ; it changes its owners daily, serves one man, or one generation of men as contentedly as it has served another and is perpetually receiving into its bowels proud creatures, who fancied themselves to have dominion over it. The Most High is the possessor of heaven and earth as well as the Creator.

Others value themselves upon honour,—upon an airy title,—upon gaudy insignia, which have no meaning but what a weak and fantastic conceit gives them,—upon a star, or a ribbon. A man lifts up his head on account of these things and cries I am such or such a dignified person amongst my fellow mortals !

Many value themselves upon their descent and ancestry,—we are of such a line, noble or royal blood runs in our veins, and we are the honourable of the earth, as if any merit belonged to them for what they could neither order or hinder.

And what multitudes value themselves upon the pomp and parade of life ! because they are arrayed sumptuously and feed delicately,—because their outside is finely trimmed and adorned and others are commanded by them and bow before them.

These are the things that poor mortals usually look big upon ; and estimate themselves and one another by ; and accordingly were they asked what they would pitch upon to give themselves weight and consequence, they would answer,—we would have certain shares of comeliness, beauty, and proportion, to be objects of admiration to others we would be richly attired, that we may admire ourselves we would have the wealth of our neighbours that meaner persons might be held in dependence upon us, and submission unto us,—we would have spacious houses,—great estates,—high connections and alliances to give us eminence in the world and to enable us to direct or control the motions and politics of it.

But these are all alien things ; they are alien and foreign to the true dignity of man. The right and fair estimation of any of us, is not to be taken from these things. Of all these we may say with St. Peter,—‘ All flesh is grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass : the grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away.’ * We have that to value ourselves upon, and to be proud of, that as much transcends all these things,

* 1 Peter i. 24.

as a diamond excels dust, or gold a feather. Man ! God calls thee to be his friend, and assures thee that he is thine, and instructs thee in the method of improving this friendship, and carrying it on to all eternity ! Here is thy greatness ! To superficial men who are caught with external shew, as if all the greatness of man arose from that, while they overlook the dignity of the immortal soul, formed for divine contemplation and converse, to them we may say as Jesus to the Pharisees,—‘Ye fools and blind ! did not he that made that which is without make that which is within also.’* Ye ignorant, infatuated creatures, who take so much pains about washing the outward part of you, do ye indeed not know that ye have an inward part, the work of the same Almighty hand, infinitely more excellent in its own nature and therefore proportionably more worthy of your attention and care. In like manner may we ask, are men indeed ignorant of the real excellence that they possess in an immortal soul, and its proper employments and improvements, that they value themselves so much, value themselves entirely upon what has no higher origin than the earth, nor any further reference than to a corruptible body ?

Let all considerate and serious men know their true excellence and assert it. Let all such lift up themselves and tell the world that they can use its good things for their present purposes, but

* Luke xi. 40.

that they scorn them as any suitable portion, and that however delightful such good things may be as the accommodations of their pilgrimage, they are not to aim at their hearts. Let all that are in actual Friendship with God especially, tell the world, when it makes its inadequate or its criminal offers, and says, 'all these things will I give you if you will worship me,'—that they know where to be better supplied,—that they have all that it can offer, and more than it can offer in their divine Friend—and that in his company and fellowship, there are sweet pleasures,—more excellent honours and more substantial blessings than the world ever gave, or knew of. This will be true greatness—the spirit and language of persons sensible of the exalted privilege of Friendship with Deity, and disdaining every thing that would attempt to rival it, or break in upon it.

II.—The life that we live in this frail body is entirely consistent with a very noble and exalted kind of life. This body with all its infirmities and encumbrances, allows capacity and opportunity for intercourse with the Father of spirits. Though it be comparatively a mean and incommodious mansion it does not hinder us from pursuing great designs and enjoying pure and very sublime pleasures. God has made it our temporary dwelling; and we must take care that we do not make it our dormitory or our grave; in which for our heaven-born souls to forget themselves; and their amazing and angelic powers to be buried

and consumed. Notwithstanding the weakness and meanness of its tabernacle of clay, the soul of man may follow its own grand and appropriate interest, and enjoy its own proper and noble gratifications. There are the pleasures of devotion for that, as well as meats and drinks and refreshments for the body, God has not dealt so unequally by the two constituent parts of our frame, as to provide suitably for the inferior appetites and leave the more excellent principle surrounded only with such things as degrade it, and render it unhappy.

Come then, O man, whosoever thou art, whose generous spirit is ready to look down with a sort of conscious despicency upon thy present condition,—come and learn how to aggrandize thyself,—and how to make fallen humanity still wear an honourable and a pleasing aspect. Thou art not yet sunk from all the privileges of thy creation and primitive condition, thou hast no occasion to herd with the brutes, as if thou hast no higher destination, nor to be ingulphed in carnal pleasures as if thou hast no higher portion. God himself courts thy communion and Friendship, he offers himself to thy view in every creature and seeks to attract thee by every favour. Friendship with God subsists in the world ; and this brings the felicity of angels down to the dwellings of men. How great does Abraham appear !—Abraham the Friend of God.—How great does Enoch appear !—Enoch walked with

God. How great does it make the apostles appear! I have called you friends. How greatly is Moses dignified!—Moses the man of God. And these high and interesting connections with Deity which have subsisted in the world may always subsist.

Thou mayest have thy share in all this honour and happiness,—Break through thy prison walls then,—look through the veil of flesh that is thy present covering,—and above men that are thy present associates,—claim kindred with the God of the universe and, give a greatness to thy condition in this world, by thy fellowship with another; have thy conversation in heaven, and thus enoble and improve thy life upon earth.

III.—We should aspire after a life thus dignified and blessed with Divine Friendship, because this was our original excellency and felicity. I observed at the beginning of this treatise, that Friendship with God was the temper and blessedness of man in his state of innocence and paradise. Now how should we aspire after this temper, and consequent blessedness again! Especially encouraged by the consideration of there being a glorious Mediator appointed on purpose to bring us back to it? It is always reckoned a commendable ambition when men endeavour by fair and honest methods to rise again to any heights of eminence from which they have fallen. Let me, then, apply this to the present case. Is it not indeed commendable

for every man to use his best endeavours for being, to a certain degree, what God made the first man; a compound of light and love,—of knowledge, devotion and duty? Such was man in his first estate—and though now his degeneracy is great and apparent, though now we have comparatively only maimed strokes of the lovely and perfect picture,—yet surely we should be enquiring after, and listening to the probable means of our restoration, we should daily be full of thought how we may again become what we originally were, we should ask is there no possibility of this? And if we are in good earnest in the enquiry, the infallible word of God will resolve the question to our peace and satisfaction, and will tell us that we may be the Friends of God again, and may enjoy again all the blessedness of that relation. Man should be ashamed of his present degenerate state because he was created in a purer and a nobler one. Degradation always implies dishonour and shame. And in the present instance, without our sincere and vigorous attempts for a recovery, and shame will be entailed upon us for ever. Therefore all such as will not be recovered from the common apostacy and be reduced to their allegiance to God, and live in Friendship with him in this preparatory state, are said, when they rise from the dead, ‘to awake to shame and everlasting contempt.’* Shame perpetuated under the eye and observation of holy and immortal angels, glorious creatures who must resent men’s

* Daniel xii. 2.

refusal of recovering goodness hereafter; as they rejoice at their repentance and conversion now. It is no shame to a creature which was always mean and ignoble, than it is so at the present moment. But that man, formed after the image of God, should lose that image, and become a part of the serpent's seed,—this we should think of with a generous indignation. An excellent person and a philosopher, * struck with the infelicity and depravity of the present state said, 'That he in a manner blushed at the recollection of his being in the body.' This shewed a refined and an elevated spirit. A similar sentiment we should adopt; and should blush at reflecting that whereas man was once a holy and a happy being, he is now unholy and depraved, and consequently unhappy; out of Friendship with God, and uncomfortable in himself, and should be enquiring, how what has been lost may be regained, and what is defective be supplied. What an ambition do men discover for regaining the credit of their family, or of their country? Let us be actuated by a still more enlarged zeal,—a zeal for the credit and interest of mankind, and under the power of this liberal principle, let us aspire, and urge others to aspire after the renewal of that Friendship with God, the loss of which is the comprehensive misery of the fall. This we shall do, if we have any sense of human greatness any remembrance of our divine original—any breathings of our ancient hope. †

* Plotinus.

† Mr. Howe.

CHAPTER VIII.

MOTIVES TO FRIENDSHIP WITH GOD. THE AMBITION OF IT IS NATURAL, COMMENDABLE. THIS FRIENDSHIP CONFERS TRUE HONOUR. IT YIELDS THE HIGHEST PLEASURE. TO SEEK AND CULTIVATE IT IS THE PART OF GRATITUDE. IT IS ABSOLUTELY NECESSARY TO US.

I.—THE ambition of Friendship with God is a natural ambition. He is not worthy of being called a man, who is not ambitious of Friendship with God. To forsake our own glorious original, lightly to esteem the God that formed us and to be lightly esteemed of him in return,—these things subject to the very deepest reproach as being repugnant to all the dictates and wishes of pure and uncorrupted nature. What is more natural between parent and children, governor and subjects, the benefactor and such as are obliged to him, than Friendship? The neglect of Friendship, and especially the prevalence of disaffection, where those relations subsist, would fill the world with confusion. How solicitous are men to be approved of the father's of their flesh? and how much more should we covet the approbation and Friendship of the adorable Father of our spirits!

Let us then never be at rest till our spirits tend to God in sincere and strong aspirations after his favour. Let us never be satisfied with the state of our own minds till a desire of divine Friendship prevail over all our other desires, and account ourselves wanting in one capital characteristic of God's creatures and children, until we prefer him above our chief joy. Let us be ashamed of calling ourselves the offspring of God, while, with the unthinking generality, we seek everything more than a mutual complacency between ourselves and our divine parent, or while, with profane and impious sinners, we live as if we meant to put a contempt upon the well pleasedness and love of our maker. Let us account a concern or unconcern about the friendship of heaven, the indication of a natural or unnatural state of mind; and let us try our spirits and be satisfied or dissatisfied with them accordingly. An unnatural state of mind will always be an unhappy one, and such ours will be till the divine Friendship be supremely desired by us.

II.—The ambition of divine Friendship is as commendable as it is natural, it will put us upon nothing but what will secure both our honour and our peace; will act in no way, but what both heaven and earth will justify and approve. In seeking the friendship of men there is always pain, and often times guilt, a conformity to them in their humours, their weaknesses or their vices, is too frequently the hard condition of keeping

in their good graces. But God is perfect and holy, and therefore, while we aim at getting or keeping his friendship, we shall do nothing but what is good and great. 'He hath shewed thee O man, what is good, and what doth the Lord thy God require of thee but to do justly and love mercy,'—so doing, thou mayest be said to 'walk with him,' * to be his Friend and associate. How strong an incentive is this to a solicitude about God's Friendship, that it will put a man upon nothing but what is in itself excellent! and how much is it to be lamented, that men will seek each other's friendship and favour by a series of foolish and hurtful lusts, which in the end drown them in perdition,—but will not seek the Friendship of Deity, although the means of obtaining and enjoying that are equally successful and reputable. Men may well be confounded at the reflection of their having sought the friendship of their fellow mortals with great uncomfortable-ness, and perhaps with some dishonourableness, while the ambition of divine favour has been extinguished in their bosoms, or been sacrificed to meaner affections and desires, although the means of obtaining it are (like the fruits of it), noble and glorious.

III.—Friendship with God confers the very highest honour: and this is a further motive for our cultivation of it. God is the fountain of honour as well as of life and therefore the closer

* Micah vi. 8.

and stricter our connections with him are, the greater lustre is reflected upon us. God reminded the Jewish church of the infinite advantage derived to it from its intimate relation to him. 'Since thou wast precious in my sight, and I loved thee—thou hast been honourable,—therefore will I give men for thee and people for thy life.'* The fate of nations shall subserve thy interest and benefit. Upon this account it is that the righteous are the excellent of the earth, and more excellent than their neighbours, they go through the world in better company,—in a higher walk of life. The honour of heaven itself is exhibited under the idea of divine converse and friendship, 'thou hast a few names even in Sardis which have not defiled their garments, and they shall walk with me in white for they are worthy.'† Paul meant to magnify both his conduct and himself when he said, 'the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the son of God.‡ Faith and Friendship with God and the Redeemer, will give splendour to our characters. All ye that have a passion for honour then, come and seek it here. Let ambition make you religious, your ambition will never have so just or so ample a province to exert itself in, as religion affords. Where is the wise man? We may ask this ironically, while we see men endeavouring to aggrandize themselves by every connection but Friendship with their Maker. A certain nobleman

* Isaiah xliii. 4.

† Revelation iii. 4.

‡ Galatians ii. 20.

of our own country, * was so charmed with the fine temper and genius, of that rare and accomplished person Sir Phillip Sydney, that he would have no other inscription on his tomb than, 'Here lies Sir Phillip Sidney's friend.' Let my tomb tell and tell truly, that a Friend of God lies in it,—and this will be more than if it was adorned with all the trophies of war, or emblems of science. How honourable ! To live in this world and be admitted as visitants to a better ! How honourable ! when in point of our real and pleasing intercourse with Deity, that may be said unto us,—'ye are come to God the judge of all.' † And when, in virtue of a raised and heavenly frame of mind, we are (according to St. Paul's manner of expressing himself), actually 'raised up from the dead, and made to sit together in heavenly places,' ‡ this is in a certain sense true, when our earthly places and stations are dignified with heavenly connexions and affections. The soul that is habituated to divine converse, that soul possesses the highest honours,—it possesses its own high and appropriate honours and shines by a reflection of the glorious excellences of its Maker.

IV.—The pleasure as well as honour there is in Friendship with God, is a further reason for our desiring to enter into it and be established in it. Solomon describes the exhilarating influence of friendship thus, 'iron sharpeneth iron, so a

* Lord Brooke.

† Hebrews xii. 23.

‡ Ephesians ii. 6.

man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend,' * removes the furrows from his brow, and the sadness from his heart. Agreeably to this declaration of the reviving effect of friendship, we read of the light of God's countenance lifted up upon his servants, and of their faces being lightened thereby, †—all impressions of sorrow, fear and shame, instantly forsaking them. The apostle John speaks with apparent rapture,—‘we have known and believed the love which God hath to us.’ ‡ Most certainly our pleasure and satisfaction will increase in proportion to the degree in which we are conscious that the divine affection of love prevails in us towards God, or see cause for believing that God bears that affection towards us. Peace and joy constitute two-thirds of God's kingdom within us: that kingdom by the laws of which he rules us, and in which we yield ourselves to him as his subjects and Friends; and must not a most happy inward state be the result of all? The Friends of God are commanded ‘to rejoice in the Lord, and that always, § and is not allowed and perpetual joy a great matter, and a great recommendation of any character or state in which it is to be found? But I enlarge not on this head having already spoken of delight in God both as belonging to Friendship with him and arising from it.

V.—We should be Friends of God, because we in gratitude owe him our Friendship. Should

* Proverbs xxvii. 17.

† Psalm iv. 6. xxxiv. 5.

‡ 1 John iv. 16.

§ Philip iv. 4.

his glory shine before us unregarded, and his goodness pass by us unheeded? Transcient and infrequent favours are often forgot, but surely incessant beneficence should have irresistible power and subdue all before it. 'A gift hath grace in the sight of every man.'* 'A man's gift maketh room for him.'† And do we want this incitement to our making the great God lovely in our eyes, and giving him a place in our hearts? Or shall the immense and unlimited bounty of God, fail of those returns which the scanty and partial favours of men usually command? The bands of love are called 'the bands of a man,'‡—human nature being generally drawn by them, and consentingly held in them and shall these bands lose their power when God would detain us in them, shall his son shine around us in strength and glory, and not kindle in our hearts the spark of Friendship to him, of whose benignity he is the minister, and of whose brightness he is the inexpressive image? Shall showers of mercy, abundant and numerous as those which water the earth, fall upon us, and yet leave us unfruitful in this most reasonable and most natural affection? Let every grateful sentiment and feeling rise and forbid it. How justly may God stop the communication of such blessings from himself to us, as cannot lead us up to him! How justly discontinue that bounty which gives him no interest in us, or hold upon us.

* Proverbs xvii. 8.

+ Proverbs xviii. 16.

‡ Hosea xi. 4.

VI.—Friendship with God is absolutely necessary to us, and this is a very urgent motive to the cultivation of it,—‘they that are far from him shall perish.’* We may be in friendship with earth and in league with hell; but ‘in his favour is life.’† Should not poor creatures who have a property in nothing that their happiness depends upon, seek a friendship with him who has all things at his disposal? Should not he have our hearts, in whose hands our breath is? Why man thou art under a sentence, thou art under his sentence, and wilt thou not make him thy Friend? O do it immediately; remember while he is soliciting thy friendship he can open the doors of the other world upon thee,—call thee into his presence and punish thee for thine enmity,—consider the danger of delay, and acquaint thyself now with him, and be at peace, that good may come unto thee. We cannot have all that we want in any mortal friend, no nor in all of them put together,—their vigilance cannot always secure us,—nor their kindness in all cases supply us. But it is the transcendent attribute of him, that keepeth Israel, that ‘he neither slumbers nor sleeps;’‡ and the treasury of his goodness will answer every demand, that poverty, pain, sickness, or fear can make upon it. Hear how St. Paul magnifies the sufficiency of divine liberality, ‘my God shall supply all your need according to his glorious riches by

* Psalm lxxiii. 27.

† Psalm xxx. 5.

‡ Psalm cxxi. 4.

Christ Jesus.* My God can do this,—how desirable and important a Friend he is! We may be happy without riches,—we cannot always be happy with them, they will not stay with us to make us so. 'Riches make to themselves wings and flee away.† Make to themselves wings,—what words can better express the uncertainty and capriciousness of the world's smiles! we cannot always be happy in the best friends,—there are times and circumstances in which they cannot befriend us,—we want one that can take us where they leave us,—at the struggles of death, at the edge of the grave, God is a necessary Friend.

* Philip iv. 19.

† Proverbs xxiii. 5.

CHAPTER IX.

SOME DIRECTIONS FOR THE MORE ADVANTAGEOUSLY PRESERVING FRIENDSHIP WITH GOD. WE MUST MAINTAIN DEEP HUMILITY IN THE COURSE OF IT.—WE MUST PAY A CONSTANT REGARD TO THE MEDIATION OF CHRIST, WE MUST MAINTAIN HIGH AND HONOURABLE THOUGHTS OF PROVIDENCE,—MAKE A GOOD USE OF ITS BOUNTIES,—BE FREQUENT IN ACTS OF REPENTANCE,—ASPIRE AFTER GREATER DEGREES AND HABITS OF PURITY.

I.—We must be humble. God selects the humble man for his Friend in preference of any other. ‘I dwell in the high and holy place with him also, that is a of a contrite and humble spirit.’ * Humility must accompany all our exercises of Friendship with God. Notwithstanding the freeness, and familiarity of the Friendship that subsisted between them, David did not forget that Jonathan was a king’s son, and paid him the tribute of profound respect and obeisance in the midst of their mutual endearments. ‘David arose and fell on his face to the ground and bowed himself three times.’ † We must in like manner preserve and express unfeigned reverence in all

* Isaiah lvii. 15.

† 1 Samuel xx. 41.

our transactions with God, and approaches to him as a Friend. Though we may come with a certain boldness to the throne of his, we must not come with impudence and rudeness. Though we may pray fervently, we must pray modestly, though we praise him with warmth and affection, it must be with veneration also, and while we plead his promises with Faith, we must also do it with submission. We serve God acceptably even as Friends, when we serve him with reverence and godly fear, and if we do not preserve such reverence and fear in our intercourse with him, we manifest a weak and blameable spirit,—we shew that we cannot bear condescension, that we are for trespassing upon grace and clemency : and we may expect to be treated by God, as we should certainly in such cases be treated by men, viz :—to have our services refused, our petitions denied, and to be kept at a greater distance. ‘Fear the Lord and his goodness,’ * is a line that every true Friend of God should wear deeply inscribed upon his heart. ‘God is in heaven and we upon earth,’ † we must not therefore rush irreverently into his temple, or be rash and hasty in our words there. He will quickly behold and resent the affront. ‘Friend ! how camest thou in hither not having a wedding garment.’ ‡ Why appearest thou before me without the proper attire and the true ornaments of a worshipping soul,—composed thoughts,—holy affections,—a

* Hosea iii. 5.

† Ecclesiastes v. 2.

‡ Matthew xxii. 12.

solemn and collected frame. God does not forget his tremendous majesty, when he makes the most encouraging declarations of his condescending mercy,—he does not forget that he is ‘the high and Lofty One that inhabiteth eternity,’ when he declares his disposition to dwell with the humble and the contrite: and we should not forget it.

In order to promote a spirit of pure and deep humility in all our religious intercourse with God, in the character of our divine Friend, let us treasure up in our minds some of the scripture representations of his incomparable and unspeakable grandeur. Isaiah in all the astonishing imagery of a prophet’s pen, describes the vast mountain of Lebanon as kindled up into one hallowed fire, and the numberless beasts of it consuming in one immense sacrifice,—and all nations of men as gathered together to attend the solemnity. These are images awfully magnificent, but yet inadequate to the prophet’s thoughts, which, aggrandized by the contemplation of that eternal majestic God whose oracle he was, grew too big for anything actually created, yea, or boundlessly imagined to express,—for he adds, with the same sublimity of sentiment,—‘All these things are as nothing!’ * But let us attend to the lofty style in which God proclaims himself. ‘I AM THAT I AM!’ ‘Tell the children of Israel that I AM hath sent you to them,’ † the being who exists in so excellent, transcendent and peculiar a manner, as to make

* Isaiah xl. 15.

† Exodus iii. 14.

all other existence vanish before him. 'I am HE, I am the First, I also am the Last, * I am God and there is none beside me.' † This is the true voice of Deity. Isaiah had pronounced the pomp of ten thousand sacrifices,—and the solemnity of an assembled world,—and the blaze of Lebanon when it should be converted into one huge and amazing altar,—to be before God as nothing,—God declares all to be in fact that very nothing which the prophet had told us it might be counted. He appropriates all existence, as well as all Deity and excellence, to himself: and leaves only the umbrage and shadow of being to the creatures. This is the glorious God, that we are allowed to call Friend; and does not profound humility become us in all the professions, sentiments and exercises of our Friendship towards him, and in the whole of our walk before him?

Accordingly, the Friends of God have always been humble men, and their very friendship with him has made them so, the calm contemplation of his infinite glories has made them as nothing in their own eyes. Observe the reverence of Abraham's spirit when allowed even to speak to God, 'Behold now I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord, which am but dust and ashes! O let not the Lord be angry and I will speak! O let not the Lord be angry and I will speak yet but this once! ‡ Moses intreated a sight of

* Isaiah xlviii. 12.

+ Isaiah xlv. 21, 22.

‡ Genesis xviii. 27.

the glory of God,—God proclaimed his mercy in the several methods of its vouchsafement answerably to the sins and miseries of men; ‘Moses made haste, bowed his head to the earth, and worshipped,’ * Job after God’s lofty and friendly conference with him out of the whirlwind, expresses the like self-abasement and humiliation, ‘now that mine eyes seeth thee,’ now that I have heard thee speak, and from thy lips discern a scanty portion of thy glory, ‘I abhor myself and repent in dust and ashes.’ † Isaiah’s vision in the temple of the Lord’s majesty, and the proclamation he heard made of his purity by exalted and celestial creatures, produced in him a like frame and state of mind with what God’s other servants professed,—the glorious sights and sounds made him startle at his own meanness and guilt. ‘Woe is me I am undone,—I am a man of unclean lips,—and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips and mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of Hosts.’ ‡

II.—As we would carry on Friendship with God in a proper and advantageous manner, we must pay a constant regard to the mediation of Christ, this we shall do, if we have that true and deep humility which I have been recommending. With the temper and influence of humility, we shall rejoice that there is a greater and worthier,—a divine person,—standing between us and the most high God; by whom for the professions

* Exodus xxxiv. 8.

† Job xlii. 6.

‡ Isaiah vi. 5.

and acts of our friendship to ascend to God, and the valuable fruits of his friendship to descend upon us. I observed at the begining of this treatise, that the restoration of Friendship between God and man, was the very business upon which Christ came into our apostate world,—and for the re-establishment of this friendship, he has made ample provision by his sufferings and death. These are strong expressions and can never be explained away, ‘he hath made peace by the blood of his cross, by him hath God reconciled all things unto himself whether they be things in earth or things in heaven, and you that were some time alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled in the body of his flesh through death.’ * We are friends of God not only by the renovation of our own spirits, but by virtue of some great purpose that the Redeemer’s death has answered in order to our becoming such, ‘When we were enemies we were reconciled unto God,’—by the death of his Son. †

Now the same great person who, by living and suffering in our world, dying out of it, and rising again has laid a foundation for that Friendship between God and man subsisting again, which the rebellion of the latter had forfeited and destroyed, the same great person is described as assisting us in all the exercises and offices of that friendship: and therefore we must be continually

* Colossians i. 20.

† Romans v. 10.

looking unto him. Who are they that are accepted now and saved finally, but they that come to God by him? Our prayer is to be offered in his name, according to his own direction; * and the sacrifice of praise which we render continually is to be by him. † Our repentance must be expressed in obedience to his commands and encouraged by his promise.

Holiness, the fruit of repentance, must be in conformity to his example, and enlivened, and improved by the bright prospects of immortality which he has given us. We must be alive to God 'through Jesus Christ.' ‡ The pleasing exercise of hope and joy are to be indulged, not otherwise, than with a spirit of unfeigned gratitude and thankfulness to Christ for he is our hope § and one joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ by whom we have received the atonement. || In a word, all that sacred intercourse with God which is the business and pleasure of a christian's life, in the capacity of a Friend of God is to be carried on through Jesus as mediator. The same may be said of all public solemnities and duties of religion: 'Jesus is the way, and the truth and the life, and we must go to the Father by him.' ¶ This is what God ordains as best befitting the honour of his own divine majesty. It is a reserve becoming his greatness and purity not to be approached in acts of religion and homage, even

* John xvi. 23.

† Romans vi. 2.

‡ Romans v. 2,

† Hebrews xlii. 15.

‡ 1 Timothy i. 1.

¶ John xiv. 6.

by them that he owns as Friends, otherwise than by means of so holy and glorious a mediator as his own Son,—the brightness of his glory, the partaker of his perfections, and the partner of his throne.

Besides, there is an evident propriety in it, that Jesus who is at last, in the noblest sense, to bring us to God,—who is to introduce the Friends of God into the everlasting habitations,—the many mansions,—the places prepared for them, there is an evident propriety in it, that this Jesus should be constituted the great medium of all our connections with God in a way of Friendship and favour now. It is, moreover, an encouraging circumstance to us, that we betake ourselves to God in Friendly intercourse upon earth, by that Mediator who is to present us for final acceptance in heaven, and whose consummate worthiness may recommend us and our services when we are there.

Who will say that the mediation of Christ may not continue longer than our world shall continue?—and be used as the mean of the saint's joyful and confidential approach to God to all eternity? Celestial creatures are described as some way interested in it and benefitted by it, as well as the children of Adam, * and who will say that with respect to both, the interest and benefit may not be perpetual? I know indeed who hath told us that, 'when the end cometh

* Colossians i. 20.

Christ shall give up the kingdom to God even the Father, that God may in an especial manner be ALL in ALL.* But although the kingdom of Christ over our world must cease with the world itself, and with those designs which the world was made the theatre for accomplishing, is there anything unnatural in the supposition that his relation as Mediator may be continued, to and amongst his servants, after that they shall be glorified? Or that in their solemn services and triumphant anthems, a reverend regard shall not be paid to the Son of God by all the eternally blessed. When they tender their loyal and obsequious homage make the returns of their grateful and overflowing affection, to him that sitteth upon the throne, for his rich and overflowing mercy, it may possibly,—it may probably with some special respect to the Redeemer,—and some advantage from that relation to him, which was founded in his death, and subsisted between themselves and him in this world. If this supposition be admitted, it is in a very magnificent sense that the Son is consecrated an High Priest for evermore; * if other orders of being besides the redeemed from amongst men, be supposed benefitted by this continual mediation, the grandeur and pleasure of the thought do still increase; and the prescribed method of our approaching God through Christ at present is made to look noble as well as encouraging.

* Hebrews vii. 28.

III.—As we would live in Friendship with God to the greater advantage and comfort,—let us maintain high and honourable thoughts of his providence,—let us beware of suspicion, of distrust; these often weaken and ruin human friendships,—let them have no place in the divine. We know that the end of all God's works and ways shall be worthy of himself, and that it shall receive the full approbation of exalted and virtuous minds, let us not then suffer anything that befalls us in our contracted stations and concerns, to militate against such our faith and knowledge. When any thought arises in our minds that tends to a denial of God's goodness to us, or that would infer a dimunition of it,—let us be jealous of that thought. Let us lay it down as an incontrovertible maxim, that God is good to them that are of a clean heart, that he may afflict in the very faithfulness of his Friendship, that he may mean the weight of affliction, as preparatory to the weight of glory, and that his goodness may be as real in what we suffer, as in what we enjoy. Let us collect the several instances of God's apparent and indubitable goodness, and have them ready at hand to oppose to our own erroneous fancies and vitiating prejudices: this will preserve the composure and settleness of our spirits, and therefore will be acting like Friends both towards God and ourselves. And with a thorough conviction of the goodness of Providence, let us accustom ourselves to the admiration of it.

Let adoring sentiments possess our hearts, and, go through the world with us. Let us take confidence from God's general goodness. 'Seek him that maketh the seven stars and Orion.' * He that guards the vast interests of the universe will never neglect or betray our little interests; as he delights in the prosperity of his servants he will pursue their prosperity, though he may not always do it within the lines that they would draw for him,—he will be left to his own superior and comprehensive measures, but in the issue 'all things shall work together for good to them that love him.' †

Such sentiments of God and providence as these are, enter into the idea of Friendship with God and will greatly strengthen and increase it.

IV.—We shall carry on Friendship with God in an advantageous manner,—by a religious use of his bounties. We know the power of riches for making us friends in this world; and we may make friends by their means in another. By a right use and application of them, we may pursue the interests of both worlds at once. We may make God our Friend,—for 'he is not unrighteous to forget our work and labour of love in ministering to his saints.' ‡ With such sacrifices, viz: doing good, and communicating, God is well pleased. § We may make Christ our Friend, 'inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of these, my brethren ye have done it unto me.' Our Saviour intimates

* Amos v. 8.

† Romans viii. 28.

‡ Hebrews vi. 10.

§ Hebrews xiii. 16.

that we may make other friends in the next world, the same way may send such friends before us, who shall be ready to 'receive us to everlasting habitations when all things here fail us.' * And how pleasing and interesting is the thought of our having friends in another world, made such by our liberality to them in this ! Friends that shall receive us with joy and gratitude, when we shall be turned out of all that we here possess ! They may say for themselves as well as a condescending and benevolent Saviour for them,— 'we were hungry and ye gave us meat,—we were thirsty and ye gave us drink,—we were strangers and ye took us in,—naked and ye clothed us,—sick, and ye visited us,—In prison, and ye came unto us.' † The last refreshment we partook of in mortal life were furnished out to us by the hands of your kindness and beneficence and now we welcome you to a participation of our superior enjoyments.

For this reason are riches given to their possessors, that both God and men may be served by them,—God, by works of piety, and men, by works of charity. God gives the rich both for their necessities, and their delights and abridges them in nothing that in the estimation of reason and virtue, contributes to either ; but then he insists upon it, that as good stewards of his manifold good things, they use and apply the residue according to his directions. And what

* Luke xvi. 9

† Matthew xxv. 35.

can be more equitable than this? If a mutual friend entrust me with a part of his substance, ought I not to use it agreeably to his will? and if instead of using it to certain worthy, and excellent purposes as he commanded, I throw it away in methods that he disapproves and condemns, and has expressly forbidden,—am not I most highly criminal? Unworthy of such a man's friendship, and of all further marks of his confidence. Yet faulty as this kind of conduct appears, it is the conduct of thousands towards the great God every day. He entrusts them with his bounties and they abuse the trust. He says occupy till I come, * and they disbelieve, or forget, that he will ever come. He commands them to do good to all, and especially, to the household of faith, † and they having served themselves in the measure that their lusts and appetites demand, waste the remaining abundance upon the worst of characters,—upon harlots,—gamesters, and revellers; this perversion and abuse of riches will make both God and men their enemies; and will subject them to strange confusion and pain when the mandate shall come, 'give an account of thy stewardship, for thou shalt be no longer steward.' ‡ But the good use of riches, gives value and lustre to a character, in the eyes both of heaven and earth. This will make God our Friend he will consider us, as what he intended we should be, the almoners of

* Luke xix. 13.

† Galatians xi. 10.

‡ Luke xvi. 2.

his bounty, and the ministers of his providence, rectifying, according to our power, those inequalities in providence of which some so loudly complain, we shall have the very highest relish and enjoyment of riches while they remain with us, and when they make themselves wings and fly away,—their flight will be grand and beautiful; like that of an eagle towards heaven, they will carry a good report of us before hand, to the throne of judgement and prove introductory to higher and better blessings. Having been faithful in little (for so the largest earthly possessions may be called), we shall be rewarded with much, and having suitably improved the false and fugacious mammon, shall have the true riches committed to us,—the riches of glory and immortality. We shall be considered as having approved ourselves the Friend of God and goodness in this world, and God will be our everlasting Friend in the world to come,—the religious use of God's mercies is no more than justice, yet such is his generosity, that he will take it for Friendship and reward it as such. He will honour and reward mere fidelity as a shining and distinguished virtue. 'Well done good and faithful servant!'

V.—If we would carry on Friendship with God to advantage, we must be frequent in acts of repentance. It is the contrite as well as humble soul, that God in an especial manner looks to and dwells with. The apostle John amidst all the rapture and triumph with which he speaks of

our fellowship with the Father has these words :—
'and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin,' * from all such sins as might otherwise destroy that fellowship, or interrupt the comfortable exercise of it. God expects and knows that there will be on our part many violations of that friendship into which he enters with us; and therefore he has made this kind provision for their being healed. This provision then, let us make thankful use of, as occasion requires. As often as we are conscious to ourselves, that we have broke the laws of Friendship with God, let us immediately go to him through Jesus Christ, acknowledge our fault and ask forgiveness. Let us be willing to ask that pardon of God in a way of religion which in a like case, we should ask of men in a way of civility,—Let no unacknowledged offence lie heavy on our spirits to estrange us from God, or to abate our confidence in calling him Father. In human friendships very trifling circumstances, have for want of being properly excused, and apologised for, been construed into serious faults: and many friendships have strangely worn off upon the slightest grounds, for want of a timely submission in the offending party,—shyness increasing on the one side, and resentment on the other. Let us take care that Friendship with God suffer not with us in this way. When we transgress against God, let us make up matters with him immediately: He will

* 1 John i. 7.

be satisfied with such submissions as men with pride and caprice reject: who are oftentimes the harder to be won, in proportion to the degree in which their reconciliation is sought and coveted. God will not treat us thus. Let us confess our transgressions unto the Lord, and he will forgive the iniquity of our sin.' * God is the compassionate Father, who will espy his returning prodigal at a distance,—run and meet him,—accept the scarcely finished humiliation and apology, and renew the relation which the offender has disgraced, and therefore dares not to claim. David found it so, and proposes his own success for the encouragement of future penitents. 'For this shall every one that is godly, pray unto thee, in a time when thou may'st be found, 'surely in the floods of great waters, they shall not come nigh unto him.' †

VI.—It is necessary to comfortable and advantageous Friendship with God, that we do continually aspire after greater degrees and habits of purity. God is holy and therefore his friends must be so. Hence the reasonable and solemn charge,—'ye that love the Lord hate evil.' ‡ The prophet puts the question, 'can two walk together except they be agreed?' § The strongest negation is here implied, no, they cannot. Iniquity has no fellowship with God. Unrighteous men; many pretend Friendship with God, and arrogate special shares of his Friendship

* Psalm xxxii. 5.

† Psalm xxxii. 6.

‡ Psalm xcvi. 10.

§ Amos iii. 3.

to themselves; like those who cried 'have we not eaten and drank in thy presence?' * But the Lord knoweth them that are his, and we may know them too, they are such as depart from iniquity. † The searcher of hearts can distinguish every enemy although in the mask of a friend, as Christ distinguished Judas,—'I have chosen you twelve, but one of you is a devil,' ‡—and there is a time coming when he will expose and publicly disown the hypocrite;—'I know you not, whence you are, depart from me.' § With what a severe countenance does St. John reprove all pretensions of wicked men to the favour and Friendship of God! 'If we say that we have fellowship with him and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not speak the truth.' || A good man could say, 'depart from me ye evil doers,' ¶ and much more will a perfect and holy God say it. If we are for a real advantageous Friendship with God, purity must be the basis, the cement of that Friendship.

And as our Friendship with God must be begun, so also carried on in purity. 'Cleanse your hands ye sinners, and purify your hearts ye double minded; thus draw nigh to God and he will draw nigh to you.' ||| Without a love of purity, and some degree of establishment in the sentiments and habits of it, we cannot have that complacency in a Holy God, which is included

* Luke xiii. 26.

+ 11 Timothy ii. 19.

† John vi. 70.

‡ Luke xiii. 27.

§ 1 John i. 6.

¶ Psalm cxix. 115.

|| James iv. 8.

in Friendship with him, and of which his genuine Friends have always been examples. 'Who is a God like unto thee.' 'Glorious in Holiness, * there is none holy as the Lord.' † 'Thou art not a God that hath pleasure in wickedness; neither shall evil dwell with thee.' 'The foolish shall not stand in thy sight, thou hatest all workers of iniquity.' ‡ 'Sing unto the Lord, O ye saints of his, and give thanks at the remembrance of his holiness.' § How can an unholy man adopt these sentiments and join in these triumphant acknowledgments. It is just in proportion to the degree in which holiness is prevalent in us, that we are qualified for Friendship with God on our part; and in the same proportion God will replenish and bless us with the delights of that Friendship. 'With the pure, he will shew himself pure, and with an upright man, he will shew himself upright.' || Purity is the glory of man,—the image of God,—this assimilates us to our divine and blessed original,—by this we dwell in God, and have God dwelling in us, and by means of the copious and increasing measures of it, we do in part enjoy in this world, the very happiness that is promised to the righteous in another,—'Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.'

* Exodus xv. 11.

† Samuel ii. 2.

‡ Psalm v, 4, 5.

§ Psalm xxx. 4.

|| Psalm xviii. 26, 26.

CONCLUSION.

I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named.* That condescending God deserves our thanks, who is willing to unite all dutiful and obedient creatures, whether in heaven or on earth, into one family; dignified and blessed by one common relation to and friendship with himself. While we reverence and adore the divine goodness in this article, let us ask ourselves, Are we interested in this goodness? Are we Friends of God? If our judgments and consciences cannot safely tell us that we are, let us next ask are we desirous of becoming his friends? If we are not desirous of it let us proceed in our enquiry, and demand of our own hearts the reasons of our indifference and disaffection. Why will we assume the character of devils, and put ourselves upon a level with them to whom the proposals of Divine Friendship are not tendered? If we are desirous of Friendship with God let us go about establishing it immediately. 'Acquaint thyself now with him and be at peace;' do it now, for delays are dangerous to a proverb.

* Ephesians iii. 14, 15.

Remember the fate of Jerusalem; that city knew not the day of its visitation, and therefore instead of being interested in the benefit of the Saviour's blood, had only the unavailing compassion of his tears.

Perhaps you may say we are actually Friends of God. Are you!—How do you shew this? We sometimes worship him,—consider, some who were loud in their cries, 'The temple of the Lord! The temple of the Lord!' * had no share in the Friendship of the great God of that Temple. Ceremonious visits are not reckoned for friendship: and yet they might pass for it, abundantly better than some men's visits at the house of their God. We designedly do nothing against God, may you say: we offer no outrage, or affront to him, or to his institutions; so far it is well. But if you do nothing for God you are not worth the name of his Friends, a neutral is not a friend. We speak of God with respect and honour,—that also is very well, but let us not substitute fine words, and fair professions in the room of the substantial duty which we owe him. We could not deal thus with our fellow creatures. Where are your actual services,—your cheerful resignations,—your obedient submissions,—your delightful converse,—your confidential trust!

If you are not solicitous about Friendship with God, and do nothing in order to attain it, what are you solicitous about? and to what do your

* Jeremiah vii. 4.

affections, cares and pursuits tend? It is but lost labour to rise early and sit up late, but not to obtain the loving kindness of the Lord. Plato is said to have been ashamed at seeing a workman risen before him. He could not bear that such a man's trade should go on faster than his philosophy. Can you feel no self-indignation in that, while meaner interests thrive with you, and inferior friendships strengthen, the grandest friendship of all is neglected by you? Is there no charm in the promise that is made to acquaintance with God,—‘so shall good come unto thee? * All manner of good shall come this way, no article of good is excepted in the promise, and we should except none in our expectations and hopes. You cannot be so great and high in the world, but God's Friendship will make you greater and higher, you cannot be so poor and depressed, but his Friendship will ennoble and raise you. Poverty is enriched, and obscurity is brightened by one smile from him, ‘but if he hideth his face, who then can behold him.’ † We may look fair in the eyes of the world, and our condition seem showy and enviable, but if we are under the frown of the Almighty, that will either secretly consume us like a moth, or like a lion, will tear all to pieces with visible resentment and fury.

You would be glad (it may be) to live in Friendship with God, but you do not consent to the conditions of enjoying it. We must deny

* Job xxii. 21.

† Job xxxiv. 29.

ourselves, you cry, in such and such pursuits and pleasures. And what then. Are you sure that virtuous self-denying, is an infelicity? Has unbounded indulgence always proved a happiness to you? The restraints of Paradise were not so grievous to Adam, as the being turned out of it: and he found himself much more of a slave in the wide wilderness of the world, than he had ever been in that enclosure into which God mercifully put him. Self-denial was the command of God, and was necessary to man, even in Eden itself, and it is necessary still. Without this, God cannot have his glory; nor his creature man his most valuable enjoyment.

To close all,—let us remember, that Friendship with God is the proper temper of man in this preparatory state,—we are going to God and therefore must be Friends of God. ‘Our Heaven (if we ever have one), must be begun upon Earth.’ It is by a restoration to ourselves, and to our God now, that we are to enjoy ourselves and him eternally. Let us be industrious in this our preparatory work, and God will work in us, and with us, of his good pleasure, he will assist us with pleasure, and reward us with pleasure.

As we improve in Friendship with God, everything will be friendly to us, both within, and about us. ‘The sun shall not smite us by day, nor the moon by night, *—we shall be in league with the stones of the field; and the beasts of the

* Psalm cxxi. 6.

field shall be at peace with us.' * Every creature shall act in friendly concert with the great Creator, for our benefit; and be the minister of his goodness,—not the instrument of his vengeance. We may command the tribes of the earth, and look up to the firmament of heaven,—may challenge the services of its glorious hosts and immortal angels,—and call all things ours because God Almighty is so. Blessed are they that do his commandments,—they have a right to the tree of life and may enter in through the gates into the city,' all is open to the Friend of God.

* Job v. 25.

THE END.

ERRATA.

Title Page	after Luna	<i>read</i>	ibi
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	47		7 for of Isaiah <i>read</i> in Isaiah
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And certain others.

Wherever the word Deity occurs, the article *the* should be prefixed.
Some scripture references are incorrectly stated.

